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ABSTRACT

Although an estimated 6 to 14 million children live with a sexual minority parent, it is apparent that these children's needs are not being entirely met by school efforts to be more inclusive. This study examined: (1) how well or poorly the resources of elementary and middle school libraries meet the needs of these children; and (2) what educators' views and ideas are for implementing curriculum changes and support services for these students. Availability of library books and other school related materials depicting alternative family experiences and lifestyles was assessed in a cross-section of schools. In addition, classroom teachers, school personnel, and administrators in graduate level education administration programs were surveyed. The results suggested that, contrary to the general belief of lack of these types of families in rural settings, most of the 14 participant teachers reported specific cases. As for the school libraries, none of the 10 participating school districts had available any fiction book devoted explicitly to the gay family, which was depicted only in books describing different types of alternative families. Regarding educators' beliefs, it appeared that although educators do have an understanding and sensitivity of the needs of this group of students, and are willing to extend services to them, they tended to shift the responsibility onto other parties such as counseling or community resources. Several recommendations were drawn from the results to help educators better meet the needs of these students, including the following: (1) conduct staff sensitivity training; (2) encourage participation of parents in all aspects of the child's education; and (3) keep an open mind. (A copy of the Alternative Families Questionnaire and a list of recommended books for children living in lesbian and gay families are attached.) (AA)

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CHILDREN WHO GROW UP WITH GAY OR LESBIAN PARENTS:

HOW ARE TODAY'S SCHOOLS MEETING THIS "INVISIBLE" GROUP'S NEEDS?

by

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A paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science

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Abstract

While the number of children of lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents is speculative, researchers cite a range of six to 14 million children who are growing up in such families. And even though many schools are considering the challenges (and the subsequent rewards) of becoming more fully inclusive-- meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of *everyone* in the "mainstream"-- it is apparent that at least this one group of students is being left behind in the shuffle. This paper will examine some of the issues facing these children, including the positive ramifications of having a gay or lesbian parent. Moreover, the question of "How are the needs of children of gay and lesbian parents being met through the schools' various support services?" will be addressed via two focal points. First, the availability of library books and other school-related materials from various elementary and middle public school libraries (comprising a cross-section of schools: rural, suburban, and urban locales) depicting non-traditional, alternative family experiences and lifestyles will be discussed. And second, responses from a questionnaire assessing the status of educators' attitudes, as well as the availability of school support services and inclusive curriculum vis-à-vis the needs of children from gay and lesbian families-- given to classroom teachers, pupil-services personnel, and administrators in graduate-level educational administration courses at two midwestern university campuses-- will be discussed. Finally, suggestions, implications, and areas of consideration for providing support services-- both for the family as well as the "identified" student-- will be addressed so that librarians, school counselors, administrators, classroom teachers, and other pupil-services personnel can be more sensitive to the academic, social, and emotional needs of this greatly valued yet invisible group of individuals.

Chapter I: Introduction and Focus of Study

Introduction

It is apparent that many school districts around the nation are critically examining their basic practices and policies surrounding their special education and at-risk programs, as well as other types of "special" services provided to students, to help meet their academic, emotional, and social needs. In turn, more and more educators, administrators, and other pupil-services personnel seem to be directing their attention and energies on inclusive schooling: where all students learn together (in integrated classrooms), where diversity is highly regarded and students from different backgrounds are respected and treated with dignity by all, and where children learn about and have friendships with other members of the classroom, regardless of others' backgrounds, abilities, learning styles, talents, and gifts. Thus, a fully inclusive school is one that educates all of its students in the mainstream and provides **all** of its students with the opportunities to receive supports when and if they need them. As Stainback and Stainback (1990) comment, "An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met" (p. 3).

Moreover, some argue for implementing inclusion and integration on the basis that our schools ought to reflect the diversity that is found in society-at-large (i.e. the "real" world). Thus, if we want our schools to be a reflection of our heterogeneous society, then schools need to be integrated and fully inclusive-- so that each student has the opportunity to learn, live, and work with his/her peers in this "natural" setting (i.e. the school community). But what happens when a given school district "limits" its outlook and/or philosophy on integration and full inclusion, by merely recognizing or mirroring the composition of individuals comprising the district's community instead of acknowledging and reflecting the diversity of the cultural milieu in our society-at-large? Can one consider this district as one that is striving to become more fully inclusive? Furthermore, what if a school system altogether fails to

acknowledge, recognize, and by extension, provide services to one of its "minority" groups? Is this school system providing a program where attaining full inclusion is in the realm of possibilities, or rather, is this system maintaining a code of conduct in which discrimination and hypocrisy is still a reality?

If one of the objectives of inclusive schooling is, in fact, to create an environment in which **all** children feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and support from peers and school personnel (in order to have their social, academic, and personal needs met), then wouldn't "turning one's back" on one particular group of children with specific needs be counter-productive towards realizing this goal? This appears to be the case for a significant number of children in schools across the country who are growing up in a family in which one or both parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Although this group of children and adolescents is considered an "invisible" minority, statistics indicate that their numbers are substantial and indeed warrant care, consideration, sensitivity, and a "second look" from those in the educational profession.

While the number of children of lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents is speculative, researchers estimate that from six to 14 million children are growing up in these "alternative" families (Bozett, 1987). Moreover, empirical data suggests that approximately one in five lesbians and one in ten gay men has children (Bell & Weinberg, 1978). Hence if one in 10 adults identifies as gay or lesbian (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), and one in five-to-ten lesbians and gay men has a child, then statistically speaking, an elementary school comprised of 500 students will have approximately from five to 10 students with sexual minority parents. Don't these students have the right to be included as acknowledged, valued citizens in their "communities?"

A final comment on inclusive schooling. Some school personnel may hold the attitude that a particular minority group doesn't "exist" in their respective school or community and therefore need not be recognized, discussed, or considered in the school curriculum or even addressed in informal discussions with students. Even if this argument held any kind of validity or truth, it would be considered biased, bigoted, and counter-productive in realizing the ideals of inclusive education. A school that is truly inclusive has as one of its goals the need to create an awareness and appreciation in **all** of its students of the **total** diversity of people, cultures, and lifestyles that exist *beyond* the parameters of the local school

district and community-- extending outward, to that of our entire society that is filled with an array of differences and complexities. As Wickens (1993) specifically states, "The inclusion of diverse family structures and family patterns in what we offer the children in our classrooms is important, whether the class has a child with lesbian or gay parents or not."

This project, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science, began with data collection in the spring of 1992 and has evolved into its present format. The paper will provide an extensive and in-depth review of the literature on the personal, emotional, academic, and social needs of children who are growing up in a family in which one or both parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Additionally, a portion of the literature review will be devoted to discussion on the importance of literature (specifically children's books that depict families in which one or both parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual) in inclusive education. Hence, the literature review will give special emphasis to these children's needs and issues, including areas of concern as well as **positive** ramifications of growing up with a parent who is of sexual minority "status." The second portion of this paper examines some investigational research conducted to assess how these students' needs are being met. This section outlines two distinct domains of investigation: 1. survey research of a sample of elementary and middle school librarians and the resources they provide to children who have gay, lesbian, and bisexual parents; and 2. survey research of a sample of administrators, pupil-services personnel, and other educators concerning their awareness, views, and services provided to these children in their schools. To conclude, the third and final portion of this document delineates suggestions, implications, and areas of consideration for providing services--both for the family as well as the "identified" student-- so that librarians, school counselors, administrators, classroom teachers, and other pupil-services personnel can be more sensitive to the variety of needs of this greatly valued yet invisible group of individuals.

Focus of the Study

The focus of investigation for this paper examines two specific questions regarding children who grow up in a family with a sexual minority parent: 1. How do the resources of elementary and middle school libraries meet the needs of children of gay and lesbian parents? and 2. What are the views of administrators, pupil-services personnel, classroom teachers, and other educators concerning children of gay and lesbian parents, and what are their ideas for implementing curriculum changes and support services for these students (as well as for their families)?

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

There are a variety of family configurations that lend themselves to differing amounts of involvement between a child and his/her gay or lesbian parent(s) (e.g. child lives with a lesbian mother in blended or stepfamily; child has visitation with a gay father; or perhaps child grows up in a household that is headed by a single gay or lesbian parent in which child was adopted or conceived by artificial insemination). But no matter how the family is structured, the child of a gay or lesbian parent tends to feel different and may have some special needs.

Gay and Lesbian Parents

Unfortunately, there are a number of incorrectly-held stereotypes, myths, and falsehoods concerning homosexuality in general, and lesbian and gay parenting in particular. Among these are myths that lesbian and gay parents are sexually promiscuous, emotionally maladjusted, and inappropriate parents; that having a lesbian mother or gay father will cause a child to become homosexual or will confuse the child's sex-role identification; and that a lesbian mother or gay father creates a damaging social stigma for the child, due to negative societal attitudes regarding homosexuality.

Although both lesbians and gay men may become parents in any of a variety of ways, much of the research to date has focussed on children who were born in the context of heterosexual marriages, whose parents divorced, and whose mothers have identified themselves as lesbians. In turn, most of the scientific literature devoted to the area of children of gay and lesbian parents has focussed on comparing children in divorced lesbian mother-headed families with children in divorced heterosexual mother-headed families. This is most likely due to the fact that lesbian mothers, like non-lesbian single mothers, are much more likely than fathers, gay or straight, to gain full child custody. As such, the myth that lesbian mothers are psychologically "maladjusted" or unable to provide competent parenting because of their sexual orientation is *inaccurate* and not supported by research. For example, there is clear psychological evidence

that lesbians are not more likely to be psychologically "maladjusted" than heterosexual women (Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982). Moreover, research examining the parenting skills of lesbian mothers has shown that lesbian mothers were rated as being as emotionally healthy as similar heterosexual mothers (Rand, et. al., 1982). Additionally, within her comprehensive review of the research on the personal and social development of children with gay and lesbian parents, Patterson (1992) states that the negative assumptions about gay and lesbian adults' fitness as parents "appear to be without foundation."

Issues and Concerns of Children Who Have a Gay or Lesbian Parent

Self-esteem and emotional adjustment. When it comes to legal custody battles in the courtroom involving gay and lesbian parents, the question which seems to be at the forefront of many people's minds is: "But is a gay or lesbian parent 'good' for the children?" And since child custody cases try to determine whether any placement is in the "best interests of the child," it seems important to look at whether children raised by lesbian mothers would suffer any greater "risks" to their emotional well-being or to their mental (and physical) health than do children raised by heterosexual parents. As such, according to several studies, **no** evidence has turned up to suggest that the children of homosexual parents are more "mixed up," disturbed, or for that matter, gay or lesbian themselves, than the children of heterosexual parents. In fact, when psychological disturbances *have* been found among children of divorced lesbian mother-headed families, they have been correlated with previous marital problems between the parents and/or the factors surrounding the **divorce** itself (refer to Kirkpatrick's study, 1981, below). This is a salient point because the dangerous misconception that children of lesbian mothers (or gay fathers) are "harmed" by their parent's sexual orientation is still all too prevalent! Patterson (1992) asserts (in her review of the literature that examines possible differences between children with gay or lesbian versus heterosexual parents), "There is no evidence that the development of children with lesbian or gay parents is compromised in any significant respect relative to that among children of heterosexual parents in otherwise comparable circumstances."

Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy (1981) compared the children of single lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. While five of the 40 children in the study-- two with lesbian moms, and three with heterosexual moms-- did have some adjustment problems, they were of the "familiar" type associated with the *divorce* (e.g. these children worried about whether they had caused their parents to breakup, and they feared future abandonment by the parents). The investigators found no difference between children of lesbian mothers and those living with heterosexual mothers-- in the areas of psychopathology and gender identity development.

Golombok, Spence, & Rutter (1983) compared 37 school-age children (aged 5 to 17 years) reared in 27 lesbian households with 38 school-age children (also aged 5 to 17 years) raised in 27 heterosexual single-parent households. The two groups did not appear to differ in terms of their gender identity, sex-role behavior, or sexual orientation. Interestingly, there was some indication of more frequent psychiatric problems in the single-parent heterosexual mom group. In addition, it is important to point out a possible source of methodological flaw in this particular study. A confounding of variables may be operating, as the group of heterosexual moms were all single, while only nine of the 27 lesbian moms were living on their own with their children. Isn't this like comparing single moms with coupled moms? In any event, Golombok and her colleagues conclude that rearing children in a lesbian household, per se, does not lead to atypical psychosexual development, nor does it constitute a psychiatric "risk factor."

Finally, Sharon Huggins (1989) looked into the domain of self-esteem and gathered data on adolescent children, ages 13 to 19 years. She divided her 36 adolescents into two groups of 18, depending on their moms' sexual orientation. Each group contained nine males and nine females, to allow for a within-groups gender comparison. The self-esteem instrument utilized was the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI). Huggins found that there were no statistically significant differences between the SEI scores of adolescents with divorced heterosexual mothers and adolescents with divorced lesbian moms. The other findings were interesting: daughters of heterosexual moms had the highest mean SEI scores, while sons of the heterosexual moms had the lowest mean SEI scores. The scores of daughters and sons of lesbian moms fell within the middle. Thus, these results seem to suggest that growing up in a lesbian

household does not, in and of itself, have a negative impact on the adolescent's self-esteem. And by extension, Huggins asserts that a mom's sexual preference is **not** a valid criterion upon which to base child-custody decisions.

Parenthetically, similar to the Golombok, et. al. study, the Huggins investigation does not hold constant the variable of "current partnership status" between the two groups of mothers. Future research on lesbian moms should control for this variable by comparing lesbian couples with heterosexual couples, and single lesbian moms with single heterosexual moms.

Societal prejudice aimed at gay and lesbian families.

> Under the best of circumstances, it is not easy to grow up in a society that suspects as pathological any variation from a mother and father stereotype.
>
> --James Levine
> *Who Will Raise the Children?*

Gay men and lesbians are still considered as members of a stigmatized group, whose lifestyles and relationships are disapproved by much of our society. Despite the aforementioned scientific data that support a relatively "normal" experience for the child who grows up in a gay or lesbian family, gay and lesbian parenting is still judged by many to be less than desirable, perhaps because of society's strongly ingrained fears. Baptiste (1987) elaborates on some of these **societal fears** which seem to perpetuate a belief that being gay or lesbian is incompatible with rearing children. One of these if the fear that children might be sexually molested by the gay or lesbian parent, or the parent's partner. Actually, according to Russell (1986) 95% of all sexual offenses against girls and 80% of sexual offenses against boys are perpetrated by heterosexual men. Another societal fear is that children of gay or lesbian parents are more likely to become gay or lesbian adults themselves. With regards to this issue, there is **no** evidence that suggests that a gay or lesbian couple or a gay or lesbian individual raising a child will influence the child's sexual orientation-- any more than will a heterosexual environment. In one study, performed by Green, et. al. (1986), the investigators concluded that there was *no* evidence that children raised in lesbian

were more likely to become lesbian or gay than children raised in heterosexual households. Furthermore, in the interviews of 36 children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers (18 offspring per group, 13 to 19 years of age), Huggins (1989) discovered that not one child of a lesbian mother identified as lesbian or gay, but one child of a heterosexual mother did. It is also worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of lesbians and gay men in our society were raised by *heterosexual* parents, suggesting that there is no evidence for a correlation between a child's sexual orientation and that of his/her parents'. Baptiste (1987) also discusses the societal fear that children living in a gay or lesbian household are more at risk of being infected with AIDS. The truth of the matter is that the AIDS virus, HIV, is transmissible via blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk-- through **intimate** sexual contact, sharing contaminated needles, breast feeding, or exposure to a contaminated blood supply with blood transfusions. One cannot be exposed to HIV through casual contact with others.

How can children who are currently living in a household with a gay or lesbian parent *not* be affected or not internalize all of the aforementioned judgments, prejudices, and fears that are bombarded at their parents on a regular basis? Also, is it possible that the current national hysteria regarding AIDS and its association (still in the minds of many) as a "gay disease" has served to only intensify society's disapproval of gays and lesbians, and by extension the *children* who live in these families?

Peer ridicule and alienation. In a frequently cited piece of research, Karen Lewis (1980) conducted a series of interviews in which she spoke with 21 children-- ranging in age from 9 to 26, from eight families-- whose mothers were lesbians. The children (10 males and 11 females) spoke about the problems they experienced during their parents' divorce, and they also shared their feelings regarding the subsequent disclosure of their mother's homosexuality. Lewis categorized her sample into two groups: "younger" children (9-13 year olds) and "older" children (ages 14-26), with 10 and 11 children, respectively, in each group. All the children had known about their mother's lesbianism for at least one year. All the mothers were currently living with their lovers. Lewis found that the "younger" children seemed to voice a greater concern vis-à-vis ridicule from peers: they feared telling others about their moms to avoid being

called names like "lesie" or "fag." These children also avoided disclosures to friends in order to fend off the possibility of their friends' mothers forbidding them to play together. An 11-year-old participant succinctly conveyed his point: "It's living a lie." For the "older" children that Lewis interviewed, peer reaction and ridicule seemed to be an area of concern as well; however, their major concern appeared to center on the area of sexuality and sexual preference (to be discussed in a forthcoming section).

A recent *New York Times* (2.11.91) column seems to validate the sentiments echoed by Lewis' interviewees. According to this article, in which 24 gay parents and their children around the country were interviewed, the most difficult time for children in dealing with the prejudices and ridicule from peers seems to occur between ages 12-14. This is the time when fitting in with "the group" may be most crucial for all kids of this age. This is also the time when children who have a gay or lesbian parent begin to guard their "secret" and pull back from their peers because it is at this age in which children begin hearing cruel and insensitive homophobic slurs from other peers. According to the interviewer, younger (under age 8) children have a different experience altogether; they seem to treat the details of their lives much more matter-of-factly. One 7-year-old boy (whose gay father had been awarded full custody after his divorce) told his school teacher that the "other" man who picks him up after school is "my father's husband."

It is interesting to note that Golombok, et. al. (1983) rated the overall quality of children's peer relations as "good" in most cases. This study compared children (aged 5 to 17 years) reared in lesbian households with children (aged 5 to 17 years) raised in heterosexual single-parent households and found no significant differences between the two groups of children in the domain of peer relationships.

Family secrecy and isolation from the community-at-large. Gay and lesbian parents, for a variety of reasons, may feel the need for family secrecy (e.g. parents may not want to jeopardize their child-custody status, community standing, or vocational footing). According to Baptiste (1982), this need for maintaining secrecy in families of homosexuals can result in a "closeted" and isolated existence for the parents as well as their kids. Such isolation may enhance children's sense of being different from peers,

and it may lay the groundwork for heightened resentment between teens and parents. Accordingly, many kids coming from gay and lesbian homes (where parents request family secrecy) may feel afraid to bring friends to their homes-- since with increased contact with the outside world comes the potential threat that the family secret will be revealed.

As Joellyn Ross (1988) elaborates in her case study of an adolescent (13-year old "Annie") living with her mom and mom's female lover, the difficulty of coping with such a family secret becomes compounded when the child grows into the adolescent years-- a time when lots of teens begin to individuate and test the limits of the family's boundaries. In the case of Annie, there was a lot of acting out. Her behavior-- involving neighbors, police, school, and extended family members--threatened and at times did expose the family secret.

But even if the child or adolescent of a gay or lesbian parent doesn't "act out" in its truest form, most children, as they get older, typically desire more involvement in school- and community-based activities (e.g. scouting, car pools for after-school activities, social events like birthday parties and school dances, etc.). How do growing children satisfy their need to develop socially without betraying their parents' trust to maintain secrecy and possibly placing their families in jeopardy of becoming "exposed?" Does such family secrecy serve to perpetuate the cultural idea that there is something wrong with a homosexual orientation? This affects not only the gay or lesbian couple's perception of their own worth and legitimacy but also feeds into the child's already acquired (i.e. learned) negative view of homosexuality.

Parent-child relationships. There are a multitude of parent-child issues that can arise in a gay or lesbian family, especially when the children are being raised in their mom's home after a divorce, and mom has subsequently acquired a female partner. But some of these issues are *identical* to children whose parents divorce but instead have a heterosexually-based blended (step) family. For instance, the new parent may be viewed as an "intruder," and the child feels abandoned because mom is now spending more time with her new mate. Some of these feelings of abandonment may eventually turn into feelings of

anger and resentment, perhaps projected onto mom's new partner. Perhaps these feelings are displaced, and the child's anger is really directed at the child's father for leaving, or at the mother for "making him leave." Lewis (1980) suggests that it is easier for children to show overt hostility to an unrelated person--i.e. mom's new partner. Other sources of strain for these children may center around the non-gay parent's own divorce issues (e.g. feelings of resentment, rejection, loss, or even homophobia). One boy, Timmy (age 11), describes it like this: "My mom is always telling us not to go with my dad because he's gay. But he's my dad and I love him" (interview from the *Wisconsin Capital Times*, 6.19.86). Issues of child-parent loyalty are unfortunately common to the divorce process for both a heterosexual-heterosexual break up or heterosexual-homosexual separation.

For some children, the issue of a parent's "newly found" sexual identity is really not as traumatic or upsetting as some may think. In Karen Lewis' previously mentioned study (1980) in which she interviewed 21 children whose mothers were lesbians, the children unanimously agreed that the breakup of their parents' marriage (i.e. the *divorce*) was **far** more upsetting than the subsequent disclosure about their mother. One 13-year-old boy asked rhetorically in the interview: "Wouldn't you rather have someone [the lover] coming into your home than leaving [referring to the father]?" Another child had said this about her mom's coming out: "That's a relief... now you [mom] can no longer put me down for things I've done."

An exceptionally interesting and thought-provoking point vis-à-vis the gay or lesbian parent-child relationship is stated in Bruce Voeller's and James Walter's published article on gay fathers (1978). They observe that children growing up in other minority families (e.g. African-American, Mexican-American, Jewish) can find refuge in the common experiences of the family members who can, in turn, teach them techniques for dealing with the outside hostility and pressure. On the other hand, most children of gay or lesbian parents do not share a "common experience" (as far as being gay or lesbian themselves) with their parents. Consequently, these children do not have the same kind of "refuge" as do children growing up in other minority families. Is it possible that this lack of a shared "common experience" may, at times, function as a barrier to close parent-child ties?

Sexual identity issues. Karen Lewis (1980) obtained several interesting responses vis-à-vis issues of sexuality from her series of interviews with children of lesbian mothers. The "younger" group of children (9-13 year olds) seemed to question how their mother's change (from straight to lesbian) would affect their own sexuality. They sort of perceived their own sexuality in the context of a "guessing game." For instance, one 13-year old shared: "Will I or won't I be gay when I grow up?... I have one parent of each [sexual orientation] so I could be either." These kids seemed to link homosexuality with their environment: "It depends on my influences."

The "older" group of kids (14-26 year olds) in Lewis' study seemed to see homosexuality more as something that is personally chosen or genetically inherited: "If my mother changed after so many years, maybe I must also..." Some kids perceived homosexuality as a consequence of experiencing failure or unfulfillment in straight relationships. Several of the girls thought they might "turn to" women if they did not have a satisfying relationship with a man. One added, "That's what my mother did."

Finally, in an article published in the *Wisconsin Capital Times* (6.19.86) in which five children of gay and lesbian parents are interviewed, the kids (between ages 11 and 20) agree that questioning their own sexual orientation is a stage that probably *all* children of gay and lesbian parents go through. And, for some of these five youth, such questioning of one's sexuality is perceived as "the biggest problem that kids with gay parents face." What seems most helpful to them, however, is being able to talk things out with their parents and other children whose parents are gay and lesbian.

Positive effects of having a gay or lesbian parent.

> Sometimes there are advantages to my parents being gay... I think I am more open-minded than if I had straight parents.
>
> --Megan, a 15-year-old girl whose mother **and** father are both homosexual
> *Different Mothers* (Rafkin, 1990)

Having a parent who is considered "different" may make it easier, in some respects, for a child to be different and/or independent in his/her own way of thinking about the world. A child who has a gay

or lesbian parent grows up learning (from very early on if s/he is *raised* by a gay or lesbian parent[s]) of the importance of being tolerant, accepting, and non-judgmental of others. This attitude of increased tolerance of others and freedom to think independently of the masses is echoed by a number of children of gay and lesbian parents: "Since I accepted that my mother is gay, my mind has just opened up to seeing so many people the way they really are" (from *Wisconsin Capital Times*, 6.19.86); "I have a gift of world experience I never could have gotten otherwise" (from *New York Times*, 2.11.91).

Children often have feelings of pride and esteem of their mother or father for proclaiming her/his own values, for standing up for what s/he feels and believes, and for challenging society's "rules" of what's considered "acceptable behavior." One individual shared with Karen Lewis (1980) the feelings of frustration before, and the subsequent feelings of admiration after her mother's proclamation of her lesbian identity: "She was no longer dishonest to herself and could be more real. I used to want to pinch her to be real." Many of the children from Lewis' interviews felt that their mom's experience had given them permission to seek roles in life that were not considered "conventional."

Lastly, Frederick Bozett (1987) states that one common advantage to having a gay or lesbian parent who is "out" to his/her children is that it seems that there is an increased likelihood for there to be more open communication between parent and child. This appears to have a reciprocal effect, giving kids the permission to be more open and direct in *their* communication with their parent.

The Importance of Literature in Inclusive Education

Mara Sapon-Shevin, as cited by Stainback and Stainback (1990), outlines a list of practical "directions" for transforming schools so that they meet the needs of all students within a single, inclusive system. She notes of the importance of setting a goal for students to not just tolerate or accept each other's differences, but to instead **honor** and **celebrate** them. There seems to be dozens of creative methods for facilitating this process, and Sapon-Shevin suggests that "librarians can set up special displays of books that explain and promote positive responses to differences and help teachers build these books into their

ongoing teaching and story times."

Probably no one would argue that classroom education about family diversity is important for the healthy self-identity of all children. Whether it's through showing pictures, using puzzles, or reading children's books, educators, whose philosophies are congruent with that of full integration and inclusion, need to be aware of the need of presenting a broad range of family structures with diverse ethnic heritages. One crucial way that a child's cultural "reality" can be validated and confirmed is via the child's self-identification with various family constellations or lifestyles that are depicted in materials used in both the library as well as the classroom. As such, librarians and teachers have the responsibility of exposing children to the full array of family lifestyle experiences (e.g. single-parent families, bi-racial families, families with adopted children, families with children who are physically challenged, etc.) if they, in fact, desire to act congruently with a school's pledge to "honor" and "celebrate" diversity in its mission of becoming an inclusive system.

But what happens when a significant minority group of students is under-represented by the unavailability of library books that portrays **their** reality-- books whose words and pictures can speak to *them*? Or, in an even more unjust vein, what happens when a teacher or librarian, either deliberately or not, fails to include a particular family situation because s/he believes it to be occurring "somewhere else?" As Virginia Wolf (1989) so pointedly states in her article (entitled, "The gay family in literature for young people"), "No matter what an adult may feel or believe about homosexuality, the lack of information readily available to young people about the gay family is an injustice." Obviously, educators must shelve their homophobic attitudes and misguided beliefs instead of shirking their responsibility with the idea that their school doesn't have the need to provide its students with this information since "there are no kids here that fit 'that' category."

Hence, for the same reasons that minority children of *all* kinds need books with positive (or at least realistic or neutral) images of themselves, children who are growing up with a gay or lesbian parent do as well-- to foster self-esteem and help promote a sense of self-identification. These children need to know that being different from the majority does not make them bad or worthless, but rather special and

valuable in their own way.

John Warren Stewig (1994) describes and critiques three children's picture books which depict family structures in which children are parented by lesbians and gay males. He advocates that school libraries purchase these books and that teachers read them to their students since:

> Some children are growing up in lesbian or gay male families. For these children, it is as important an affirmation that they see themselves in books as it is important that ethnic minority children see themselves in books. This is critical, even when some parents object to such books... We as teachers must take the responsibility to make available for children books that represent the whole range of our world today, even when some of the topics may make some of us personally uncomfortable.

It is crucial to note, according to Wolf (1989), that children of gay and lesbian parents are not the only ones who need to read books about gay and lesbian families-- rather **all** children do (as well as their parents). Because books can provide readers with the experiences of gay and lesbian families and thus foster understanding of these experiences, perhaps this may be one way to combat some of the fear and homophobia surrounding these families. In her search for books that depict children growing up with a gay father or lesbian mother, Wolf discovered that there are few books about gay and lesbian families (she discovered eleven of them), and their whereabouts are "extremely difficult to locate."

Stewig (1994) echoes Wolf's assertion that all people ought to be exposed to literature that portrays a variety of family constellations-- not just those reflected by the majority of families in society-- to help foster understanding, sensitivity, and a sense of appreciation of others. Stewig states, "Such books... are important for children growing up in a lesbian or gay male family. They are equally important for children growing up in heterosexual families, for seeing such diversity in books can only help all children more accurately understand the variety of life today."

It thus seems that a school which advocates integration and inclusion in its philosophy on education is to have a climate in which all of its students are acknowledged, respected, and treated with dignity-- an atmosphere in which **all** student diversity is truly celebrated. Thus, is it *doubly* an injustice when a school provides few, if any, books depicting gay and lesbian families? It seems that **both** groups of students would get short-changed: the children growing up in these families get a raw deal since their

family lifestyle is "silenced," and the general student body loses an opportunity to receive information that challenges preconceived myths and stereotypes.

What's Missing from the Professional Literature?

There seems to be a variety of omissions in the professional literature regarding children of gay and lesbian parents. First, as previously mentioned, there are very few studies depicting children who are living with gay fathers. Though it may be difficult to locate such individuals, it would be interesting to examine differences in children's experiences-- between growing up with a gay father and growing up with a lesbian mother. And even though many of the findings from the aforementioned studies of lesbian moms and their children can be generalized to children with gay fathers, it would be of interest to have more scientific data to support these assumptions. Second, there needs to be more "parallelism" in the research when comparing children growing up in lesbian parent households with those growing up in heterosexual, single-parent families. In many of the previously mentioned studies, there seems to be a tendency to compare development among children of a group of divorced lesbian mothers, many of whom are living with lesbian partners, to that among children of a group of divorced heterosexual mothers who are not currently living with heterosexual partners. As in the Golombok, et. al. study (1983), children of single heterosexual moms were compared to children living with lesbian mothers-- some of whom were single or coupled with a partner. It's apparent that the variable of "number of parents in a household" needs to be controlled when performing comparative research.

In addition, it seems that most of the research on lesbian and gay families has focussed on "structural rather than process variables" (Patterson, 1992). In other words, apparently there are more studies comparing children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers and less research focussing on the *qualities* of interaction and relationships *within* these families. As such, there seems to be very little research on the diversity among families in which children are growing up with gay or lesbian parents. For example, what do children experience when their lesbian mother has a romantic partner compared to

not having a partner? Or what is it like for children when parental sexual orientation is accepted by other significant adults compared to when this is not the case?

Furthermore, with the exception of some pieces of research (discussed in the next paragraph), there is nearly a complete void of any discussion of children of lesbian and gay families (or even family diversity, for that matter) when authors write about inclusive schooling and/or multicultural education. For example, in Stainback and Stainback's text entitled: *Support Networks for Inclusive Schooling: Interdependent Integrated Education* (1990), there is nothing noted on children of gay and lesbian parents, even in those chapters which elaborate on celebration of and fostering understanding and respect for individual differences. Moreover, these children are not recognized in discussions of multilevel curriculum changes. Typically, the domains of race, cultural heritage, physical and cognitive ability, and socioeconomic level receive much attention when writers elaborate on inclusive schooling; unfortunately, the area of family diversity tends to be left by the wayside. Children of lesbian and gay families have a right to and a need to be included when aspects of inclusive schooling are considered and implemented.

The topic of family diversity *is* discussed with regards to inclusive schooling in some relatively recent publications. For example, Elaine Wickens (1993) interviewed gay and lesbian parents with children ages three to seven and discovered that not all teachers and administrators comfortably handle diversity of family structure. When asked if she would read a book about a family that had two moms, a boy, and a dog, and what they did during a week, one teacher stated, "I wouldn't without talking with all the parents because I don't want to teach sex in second grade." (One could speculate to what extent this teacher would see herself teaching about sex if the story had been about a mother, a *father*, a boy, and a dog.) Additionally, Susan Corbett (1993) maintains that all school staff must be sensitive to issues concerning gay and lesbian parents, as well as gay and lesbian colleagues. She takes this stance one step further by maintaining that early childhood teachers and administrators must address the possibility that the young children they serve may become gay or lesbian adults. Finally, Casper and her colleagues (1992) assert that the issue of children growing up with gay and lesbian parents must not be limited in scope between parents and teachers but instead be "reflected in the larger arena of the school." The investigators

that very specific questions need to be thought through and considered, including: 1. How can the *administration* help both teachers and parents? 2. What kinds of parent meetings can support the work of teachers in building a more inclusive curriculum? and 3. How difficult would it be to alter the "mother" and "father" line on school applications to a more generic "parent" line? The researchers succinctly argue that both teachers and parents could more easily discuss gay and lesbian family constellations if the fact that lesbian and gay people *exist* is accepted.

Additionally, an immediate obstacle in exploring the importance of literature in inclusive education, specifically children's literature depicting children living with gay and lesbian parents, is the lack of *professional* material written on this topic. A routine search of the ERIC data base revealed that the data base from September 1982 until September 1991 contained 266 entries including the word "homosexuality" (which incorporates the descriptors "gay," "lesbian," or "bisexual"), 911 entries containing the word "parents," and 2,076 entries containing the phrase "children's literature." Yet, when querying ERIC for entries that contained all three of the aforementioned descriptors, only **one** entry (the Wolf article) over the 9-year period met the triple criteria. (It was surprising that ERIC did not mention the journal *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* [1983] which devoted one entire volume to "Homophobia and Education.") Similarly, a search of the ERIC data base from 1992 to March, 1995 again shows the paucity of professional writing on gay and lesbian families in children's literature. When querying ERIC for entries that contained all three of the aforementioned descriptors, only *one* entry (Stewig's 1994 article entitled, "Self Censorship of Picture Books about Gay and Lesbian Families"), could be ascertained from this time period.

A final note on "oversights" in the literature. Even in the picture books or other literature that *are* available for children of lesbian and gay families, according to Wolf (1989), the diversity of gay and lesbian families in our society is not accurately represented. For example, she did not find one book about children of gay and lesbian parents who chose to have children *after* they had become a couple. Moreover, Wolf points out that the picture books seldom seem to focus on the "normal" and the "ordinary." Rather than focusing on these families' well-being, the stories focus on problems. As such, although it may be a

happy and healthy environment, the gay or lesbian family seems to be depicted as neither.

How This Research Adds to the Professional Literature

The present investigation adds to the body of literature on children growing up in gay and lesbian families in that it presents data from an educational base. As expounded in the literature review, most of the information regarding these children tends to take a clinical focus-- examining such intrapersonal issues as emotional adjustment and self-esteem, as well as interpersonal issues such as peer relationships, family isolation and secrecy, and societal fear and prejudice. The present study mainly addresses attitudes and viewpoints of those in the educational field: pupil-services personnel, administrators, classroom teachers, librarians, and other educators. Specifically, the investigation will provide some insight into how the needs of children of gay and lesbian parents are being met in the school community today.

Chapter III: Methodology

Sampling and Data Sources

Data collection took place in April, 1992 for responses from school administrators, pupil-services personnel, classroom teachers, and librarians regarding school services provided to children of lesbian and gay families. First, masters and doctoral students (comprising school and district administrators, counselors, speech and language specialists, classroom teachers, directors of pupil services, as well as other pupil-services personnel) at two separate midwestern state universities were given a questionnaire to voluntarily fill out and complete during class. Next, both groups were asked to bring a copy of a *different* questionnaire (targeted for librarian use) to their respective elementary or middle school/district librarians (or media specialists), have them voluntarily complete this instrument, and mail back to the investigator (a self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided).

A total of nine graduate students comprised the first class surveyed (two males, seven females), and eight students were present to complete the instrument during class. A total of 28 graduate students comprised the other educational administration class surveyed (15 males, 13 females), and 21 of these students participated and completed the questionnaire during class (the other seven students in this class were either absent or worked in a setting other than primary and secondary education and thus were not considered).

The schools, represented in the questionnaires completed by administrators, classroom teachers, pupil-services personnel, as well as the school librarians and media specialists, range from less than 10 to more than 90 miles in radius from one of two mid-size midwestern cities. The districts themselves range in size from less than 250 students to more than 10,000 students. In all, 29 disparate school districts participated in the investigation pertaining to administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel. In turn, these 29 school districts can be classified into one of three geographical categories: 14 from rural areas, 4 from suburban locales, and 11 from urban regions. Moreover, a total of 10 different

school districts (from the aforementioned 29 participating school districts) participated in the other portion of this study, vis-à-vis school librarians and media specialists.

With regards to the first questionnaire (administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel), analyzed data represent findings from elementary, middle, and high school personnel. And in relation to the second questionnaire (school librarians and media specialists), results represent findings from elementary and middle school libraries only. The response rate for the librarians (N=10) was considerably lower than for the administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel (N=29) due to two operating factors. First, the librarians were required to *mail* their completed questionnaire to the investigator (reminder notices and another copy of the appropriate questionnaire were sent to them), while the other group (administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel) simply completed and handed in their questionnaires to the investigator during class. And second, the data from the sample of administrators, classroom teachers , and pupil-services personnel spanned all three school levels: elementary, middle, and high school-- thus yielding a relatively larger sample size. Due to the nature of the research, only data from elementary and middle school librarians could be utilized for the other portion of the study.

Procedures

To answer the first research question (How do elementary and middle school librarians address the needs of children of gay and lesbian parents?), each of the administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel (from the two surveyed graduate-level educational administration courses) was asked to have his/her respective elementary or middle school librarian/media specialist voluntarily fill out a questionnaire asking about the availability of specific books within his/her building library or district. A cover letter accompanying the questionnaire provided background information about the nature of the investigation as well as detailed and specific instructions for completing the questionnaire. The confidentiality of all responses was emphasized. Questionnaires were mailed back to the investigator.

A reminder notice, along with another copy of the librarian survey, was mailed to each of the students from the two graduate-level educational administration courses, asking each to remind his/her librarian to please complete and return the survey, if he/she so desired to participate.

To answer the second research question (What are the views of administrators, pupil-services personnel, and classroom teachers concerning children of gay and lesbian parents, and what are their ideas for implementing support services to these students and their parents?), the investigator surveyed two separate graduate-level educational administration classes at two different midwestern state university campuses, approximately 90 miles apart from one another. The investigator presented a brief overview of the nature of the investigation to both classes and asked both groups of administrators, pupil-services personnel, and classroom teachers to voluntarily participate by supplying answers on a questionnaire dealing with the topic of students who are growing up and/or living with one or more parents who is gay or lesbian. All respondents were reminded of the confidentiality of their answers. Questionnaires were completed and subsequently collected during class-meeting time.

Instrumentation

Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists. This questionnaire(see the Appendices for the questionnaire) was given to an elementary or middle school librarian via his/her building administrator, classroom teacher, or pupil-services personnel who participated in the other portion of the study. Attached to the questionnaire itself were three other pieces of materials: 1. a cover letter explaining the nature of the investigation, 2. a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return the completed questionnaire, and 3. a bibliography (see Appendices) containing a list of books and their respective summaries depicting not only children with gay and lesbian parents but books that portray the broad diversity of alternative families in our culture (e.g. stepfamilies, extended families, bi-racial families, single-parent families, etc.). The bibliography, entitled *We Are Family*, was provided to give librarians a sense of the availability and existence of these books. Moreover, each of the titles on the

Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists is mentioned in this bibliography.

This particular questionnaire has two distinct components. First, the librarian is to indicate a particular title's **location**: Is it shelved at the school library of the participating lib arian? Or is it circulating somewhere within the school district, perhaps at another building library? Or is it simply not available? Second, the librarian is to indicate a particular title's **accessibility** to students: Is the particular book accessible directly to students for check out? (i.e. Can students take out one of these titles with the same degree of freedom as they can for other books in their school's library?) Or is the book available to students on a "staff-recommendation" basis only? (i.e. Child needs the permission/referral of a teacher or counselor to read or check out of library.) Or is the particular title accessible only to school staff? (i.e. Student cannot read and/or check out-- only a staff member at school can do so and subsequently read to his/her students.) Finally, at the end of the questionnaire, librarians are asked to answer a question vis-à-vis the location of these particular titles with respect to where other books are shelved. (i.e. Are these books separated and self-contained, or are they integrated with the rest of the school's collection of fiction/ picture books and other books which discuss various family constellations?) A space for comments is designated at the end of the questionnaire.

Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel. This questionnaire was constructed by the investigator with the following three ideas in mind: first, to inform these educators of the *existence* of this group of children; second, to gain some perspective of what is actually going on in schools today vis-à-vis children who grow up in families with one or more gay/lesbian parents; and third, to plant a seed by having these educators and administrators think about what types of services and/or curriculum modifications they *can* provide to these students (as well as their families).

The questionnaire (see Appendices for this questionnaire) was distributed by the investigator to students in two separate graduate-level educational administration courses comprised of administrators, pupil-services personnel, and classroom teachers. The students were reminded that completing the questionnaire (to be done in class) was strictly voluntary and that all answers would be kept confidential

and anonymous (names and schools would not be furnished). The questionnaire itself was handed out along with: 1. the questionnaire and other materials for each student's elementary or middle school librarian/media specialist to voluntarily complete and return; and 2. a cover letter providing information as to the purpose of the study and some of the logistics behind the investigation (i.e. asking these students to take the instrument for librarians back to their respective elementary or middle school librarians/media specialists and have them voluntarily complete and return it to the investigator).

The specific items comprising the Alternative Families Questionnaire (for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel) ask individuals to supply information regarding what is *currently* going on in their school districts, as well as ideas for what *can* be provided to students who are living with and/or growing up in a family in which one or both parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual (i.e. what can be implemented/changed that is not occurring right now). Specifically, Questions 6-12 on this instrument query for information in the following domains: individuals' familiarity with this group of students; their own personal attitudes about them; the availability of school support programs/services and inclusive curriculum; perceived barriers to providing information and services; and perceived concerns facing students who are growing up with one or more gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents. While Questions 1-5 are objective in nature and ask for demographic information, Questions 6-12 are open-ended, subjective questions that require a reasonable amount of thought and self-reflection. The subjective portion of the instrument begins with programmatic-type questions and then subsequently queries for more individually-centered, personal responses and comments.

Data Analysis

To answer the two research questions, the data from both components of the investigation were analyzed by the following means. First, with regards to the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists, a frequency response was tabulated in order to yield a percentage figure depicting the availability of each specific book title, based on the total sample of questionnaires returned.

Next, with regards to the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel, responses from Questions 1-5 (demographics) were analyzed similarly: frequencies and percentages of each response selected with respect to a particular question were calculated. Some questions produced higher frequency totals than others. For example, the data from Questions 3, 4, and 5 produce frequencies totaling the number equivalent to the sample size of 29. This is because participants could only provide a *single* response for each of these questions, due to the nature of the question. However, Questions 1 and 2 could be answered by one individual supplying information beyond that of a single item. For instance, Question 2 asks for the school level(s) which one's position involves. It's conceivable that a school counselor, for example, works at both the middle and elementary school levels and would thus check *both* of these choices. Thus, the total frequencies when added for each response in Questions 1 and 2 do not add to 29 (the sample size), as they do for Questions 3, 4, and 5.

Finally, the data from Questions 6-12 on the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel were analyzed by listing all the responses to each question and subsequently searching for various themes and patterns that emerged. And for each particular question, the frequencies of various response themes were calculated and then placed into a table to enhance the clarity of data presentation. Incidentally, for most of these particular questions, many of the participants responded in several different ways and thus may have provided answers belonging to *several* themes for a particular question. Therefore, within a specific question, it's likely that there are more responses (when a frequency is totaled) than there are individuals comprising the total sample of 29.

Thematic analysis was based solely on the content of responses provided for each question (6-12) of the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel. For the most part, determining distinct themes based upon responses to a particular question was a straightforward process-- beginning with listing all the responses to a particular question, finding distinctions and commonalities amongst these replies, and then forming groups or themes. To illustrate, looking at the various themes for Question 6 (see Table 10), many individuals replied that their school's

developmental guidance program or health curriculum, for example, is the vehicle for educating its students on the array of alternative family structures in our society. At the same time, ten other individuals responded in a similar manner-- by suggesting guidance groups, classroom discussions, specific curriculum, etc. However, these ten individuals distinctly indicated that gay and lesbian families would **not** be included in the presentations/discussions on family diversity. As such, the investigator chose to include a theme describing the notion that some schools are teaching students about alternative family constellations yet are deliberately omitting gay and lesbian families from their discussions. The following response illustrates: "We discuss these issues in our developmental guidance program, middle school life-living skills, and within the sociology, psychology, and family and consumer ed. curriculum. The issue of gay/lesbian families, however, as far as I know, is not discussed."

An example of differentiating somewhat closely related replies from each other but then placing them into distinct themes can be seen for part (a) of Question 9 (see Table 13). In response to perceived barriers that make it difficult to disseminate information to colleagues and students regarding gay and lesbian families, seven educators stated that the barrier was "localized" within the school itself. Phrases like "colleagues' reactions" or "staff having biased views" cued the investigator to conceptualize such responses as falling under the rubric of "school climate" (prevailing attitude within school). In contrast, 13 people mentioned the barrier as extending beyond that of the confines of the school building and carrying over into the community. Key words such as "parents," "community," or "district" indicated to the investigator that this type of response (attitude) seemed to be more global and ingrained within a larger system than that of the school building itself. Hence, this justified the need for a separate theme-- that of "Perceived attitude in the community/perceived pressure and resistance."

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

How Elementary and Middle School Libraries Address the Needs of Children of Gay and Lesbian Parents

Due to the nature of the book titles on the questionnaire, the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists was appropriate only for those individuals working in an elementary or middle school library. Generally speaking, the nine fiction/picture books and the five non-fiction/family books are suitable for readers starting at grade level 3, continuing to and including grade level 8. (See attached bibliography, *We Are Family,* in the Appendices for book summaries.) A total of 10 librarians comprised the sample for this part of the investigation. The following table illustrates the break-down, by grade level, of those participating:

Table 1: Librarian/Media Specialists Demographics: Grade-Level Distribution

Grade Level	Frequency
K-5	3
K-6	1
K-8	2
6-8	2
7-9	1
6-12	1

Three other completed librarian questionnaires could not be included as part of this sample: two of them represented findings from grade levels 9-12 (high school), and the other represented results from a community public library (which, by the way, carried the book, *Daddy's Roommate*, a title which no other of the 10 school libraries reported available). Moreover, by matching librarian questionnaires with those completed by their respective building administrator, classroom teacher, or pupil-services personnel (the aforementioned groups of individuals, during the time in which they completed their questionnaires during class, were asked to place some type of matching identification code on both their own

questionnaire as well as on the questionnaire to be later completed by their elementary or middle school librarian/media specialist), the following information was compiled vis-à-vis school district size as well as town classification in which the school district resides:

Table 2: Librarian/Media Specialists Demographics: Size of School District

Size of School District	Frequency
less than 250 students	---
between 250 and 500 students	1
between 501 and 1,000 students	1
between 1,001 and 5,000 students	3
between 5,001 and 10,000 students	---
more than 10,000 students	1
did not indicate	4

Table 3: Librarian/Media Specialists Demographics: Classification of Town/City Which School District Resides

Type of Locale	Frequency
rural	2
suburban	2
urban	2
did not indicate	4

The next two tables (Tables 4 and 5) summarize the information gathered from the 10 questionnaires from school librarians and media specialists and represent the availability of books for students that depict children growing up and/or living with one or more gay or lesbian parents.

Table 4: Availability of Alternative Gay and Lesbian Family Story Books in 10 Elementary and Middle School Libraries

Title and Author	Frequency	Percentage
Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin Susanne Bosch	0	0%
Asha's Mums Rosamund Elwin	0	0%
My Crazy Sister M.B. Goffstein	0	0%
Self Portrait: Trina Schart Hyman Trina Schart Hyman	3	30%
Heather Has Two Mommies Leslea Newman	0	0%
Lots of Mommies Jan Severance	0	0%
When Megan Went Away Jan Severance	0	0%
Daddy's Roommate Michael Willhoite	0	0%
Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe Vera B. Williams	5	50%

Table 5: Availability of Non-fiction/Family Books (Depicting Various Alternative Family Constellations) in 10 Elementary and Middle School Libraries

Title and Author	Frequency	Percentage
Your Family, My Family Joan Drescher	0	0%
Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love Aylette Jennes	3	30%
Chag Sameach! Patricia Schaffer	0	0%
How Babies & Families are Made (There Is More Than One Way!) Patricia Schaffer	1	10%
Families Meredith Tax	2	20%

It seems apparent that based upon this sample, the availability of these books for students in elementary and middle school libraries is remarkably low. It is not surprising to the author that of the nine

fiction/picture books listed in Table 4, the only titles that seem to be shelved in school libraries (*Self Portrait: Trina Schart Hyman* and *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe*) are those which are not explicitly gay or lesbian; rather, they feature families "headed" by two women. In a similar vein, though the availability of non-fiction/family books (i.e. books that present a variety of different types of families, compiled into a single anthology, including lesbian and gay families) is relatively higher than that of the aforementioned set of titles, the numbers seem to suggest a paucity of such material.

Moreover, two of the available titles (*Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe* and *Families*) could not actually be found in some of these schools' libraries but instead were "floating" somewhere within the district: this was the rationale for having three separate responses on the questionnaire for a particular book's availability (e.g. "Building Library," "District or CESA," or "Not Available").

Also, it should be noted that for those titles that were available from a particular school's building library, such books *could* be checked out by the student him/herself. The rationale for including this second category of "Accessibility to Students" on the questionnaire (e.g. "Student Check Out," "Staff Recommendation," or "Staff Only") stems from a pilot survey that was done prior to the current investigation. In the pilot survey, performed by a series of telephone interviews to a group of elementary school librarians from rural, urban, and suburban school districts, it was discovered via conversation that for one particular book (*Heather Has Two Mommies*), though **available** to students, it could not be **checked out** by students (i.e. would be considered as a "Staff Only" response on the questionnaire). Moreover, this book was not shelved with other titles depicting family stories. (Hence the rationale for asking the question on page 2 of the librarian survey: "If you do have some of these titles in your school/district library, WHERE are these books shelved with respect to other books?") Interestingly, this particular elementary school librarian, from the earlier pilot study, worked in an *urban* school district. This librarian had the following comments:

> We're located in a non-progressive, working class neighborhood, and it just seems that the attitude is that you [student] shouldn't get those books by mistake. We used to have *Heather Has Two Mommies* shelved in the same area as our other picture books. However, there was a big 'what to do' at the school last year where a child brought the book home, and the child's conservative parents seemed upset about the child's having it. So,

> now the book is shelved in another section, with our "problem books" along with books that deal with issues like alcoholism and child abuse. This way, if the school social worker or a teacher needs such a book, s/he knows exactly where to find it. And so, if a child wants a particular title, s/he can inform her/his teacher or the school social worker, since basically these books are for teacher check-out only, rather than for general circulation.

It seems apparent to the investigator that some of the "idiosyncratic" data gathered from the earlier pilot librarian phone survey (performed in November, 1991) could not be obtained from the current investigation in which the investigator opted for a questionnaire to be utilized. Though the questionnaire was indeed a much more efficient, less costly, and more standardized means for collecting data, the phone survey conducted in the previous pilot study allowed for personal reflections, attitudes, and ideas concerning gay and lesbian families to be communicated from the school librarian to the investigator. In other words, the subjective question of "To what extent did this particular individual verbalize awareness and sensitivity for this group of children?" could be examined and ascertained.

Some of the comments from the librarians who participated in the phone survey (in the original pilot study) seemed to have homophobic undertones to them: "We have various books on families where there is a divorce, but it sounds like you are looking for books which are a little more drastic than that." Moreover, some of these librarians (who participated in this pilot study) expressed, with a tone of certainty and confidence in their voices, that their schools did not have students with gay or lesbian parents: "I am sure that we don't have families of 'that' type... We are, after all, a small, rural district."

But perhaps most disheartening of all the responses from the librarians, who were contacted by phone in the previous pilot study, came from a librarian who conveyed the idea that people who are looking for books that portray a specific minority group not represented in her school (or so she may believe) ought to seek out these publications from libraries in larger cities:

> In smaller districts, we have to be more careful about that. The teachers here probably wouldn't want to deal with that subject. They may object to it. They might be more willing to address the area of bi-racial marriages, but I doubt if they'd be willing to deal with the other areas you mentioned [gay and lesbian families]. You may want to try a larger district like in [City X].

Ironically, it is in this town (where the aforementioned librarian's school district resides) that a well-read

and widely circulated gay and lesbian newspaper is published on a monthly basis.

Finally, it should be noted that some idiosyncratic data could, in fact, be gleaned from the librarian questionnaires used in the current investigation. For example, in response to the question, "If you do have some of these titles in your school/district library, WHERE are these books shelved with respect to other books?" the following comments were offered: "They are located in the appropriate section: human-biography; three days-- easy fiction section." and "If I had any, they would be placed on the regular shelf." Moreover, some of the librarians who participated in the current investigation offered their comments and personal views in the appropriate section on the questionnaire labelled under "COMMENTS." For example, one librarian provided a list of other "alternative" books which his/her elementary school library provides to its students, including *Losing Uncle Tim*, a book which depicts a young boy coping with a relative who is dying of AIDS. (Incidentally, this particular book, though not considered to be gay or lesbian oriented, is one of the titles listed in the bibliography, *We Are Family* [see the Appendices], that was provided to these librarians in appreciation for their participation in the study.) Other responses include the following: "Thank you for raising my awareness of these books and the need to make them available and accessible to students." and "Thank you for the bibliography, *We Are Family*. I also made a copy of this survey [questionnaire]. It made me aware of an area that needs addressing."

Views of Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel Regarding Children of Gay and Lesbian Parents

A total of 29 school administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel comprise the participants in this part of the investigation. The following tables (Tables 6-9) summarize some of the demographic data pertaining to this group if individuals, based upon responses from the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel (see Appendices for the instrument itself). Note that for Questions 1 and 2, there are more responses than there

are participants, as some individuals carry "dual" positions.

Table 6: (Question 1): Your Position at Work

School Position	Frequency
classroom teacher	9
principal/assistant principal	8
district administrator	0
Pre K-12 director of pupil services/special education	6
Pre K-12 director of curriculum/instruction	3
support services personnel (e.g. school psychologist)	4
other (e.g. reading resource teacher)	1

Table 7: (Question 2): The School Level(s) Which Your Position Involves

School Levels	Frequency
elementary	6
middle	7
secondary	10
Pre K-12	9
other (e.g. vocational prison)	1

Table 8: (Question 3): The Approximate Size of Your School District

Number of Students	Frequency	Percentage
less than 250 students	2	7%
between 250 and 500 students	2	7%
between 501 and 1,000 students	5	17%
between 1,001 and 5,000 students	12	41%
between 5,001 and 10,000 students	6	21%
more than 10,000 students	2	7%

Table 9: (Question 5): Classification of Town/City of Your School District

Type of Locale	Frequency	Percentage
rural	14	48%
suburban	4	14%
urban	11	38%

Based upon results from Table 8, it appears that school district size is normally distributed, with most of the school districts represented in the study (41%) having between 1,001 and 5,000 students. Moreover, it seems that the sample is represented fairly well in terms of town/city size, with the majority of the sample being represented by rural regions (48%). Thus it appears that the various school districts participating in the current investigation depict a good cross-section vis-à-vis a variety and range of school and community sizes.

The next set of tables (Tables 10-17) outlines the responses that the 29 educators offered in answering Questions 6-12 on the Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel. The tables, themselves, are organized by "themes," as this was the method selected for data analysis. As such, it should be noted that respondents sometimes supplied information on the various questions that could be conceptualized as belonging to two or more themes. Hence, for each question there may be a higher number of responses than there are participants, as some individuals' answers belong to more than a single theme. Discussion and interpretation, along with some quotations to highlight various themes, follow each table. Moreover, concluding remarks regarding these findings are presented in the initial portion of Chapter V (Summary, Implications, and Conclusions).

Table 10: (Question 6): Currently, to What Extent Does Your School/District Educate Its Students on the Variety of Alternative Family Structures That Exist in our Society?

Theme	Frequency
1. Health curriculum (grades K-12)	6
2. Social studies curriculum	2
3. Specific courses other than health and social studies (e.g. family & consumer ed.)	6
4. Developmental guidance (K-12) curriculum -- groups and classroom teaching	6
5. Individually delivered by guidance counselor or school psychologist	1
6. Via guidance groups, specific curriculum, or classroom discussion but **excluding** dealing with or mentioning of gay and lesbian families	10
7. Not directly, but rather incidentally (i.e. happenstance during classroom discussions)	2
8. Via parent education activities	1
9. Via school-age parent class	1
10. Covered in some form in classroom but uncertain about *depth* of coverage	2
11. Very little coverage/education, or not at all	9
12. Not sure if covered/don't know	3

Two points are worth mentioning from the data in Table 10. First is the idea that school districts are educating their students on family diversity but are deliberately omitting any discussion on gay and lesbian families (theme 6). And second, it seems remarkable that a total of 14 responses conveyed the attitude of "little coverage" or "not sure if covered at all."

Table 11: (Question 7): Currently, What Types of Practices Is Your School/District Utilizing to Provide Support and/or Services to Students Who Are Growing up in Families with a Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Parent(s)?

Theme	Frequency
1. Individual counseling with school counselor, psychologist, social worker	4
2. Available groups (e.g. AODA, divorce) but nothing specific for this issue	3
3. Referrals for in-house and out-of-house counseling	1
4. Student Assistance Program (SAP)	1
5. Classroom discussions on family diversity	2
6. Library materials and curriculum	4
7. None, that I know of	12
8. None now but plans are underway for more services to be provided	1
9. Little, if any	5
10. I don't know	3

Based on the types of responses that this group of educators supplied, it is apparent that the majority of school districts from this sample offer very little to meet the needs of these students. Looking at Table 11, there are a total of **21** responses that indicate a lack of support and/or services, or none at all.

Table 12: (Question 8): What Are Some Ways That You or Your School District CAN Provide Support to These Students and/or Their Families?

Theme	Frequency
1. Via school climate/prevailing attitude	5
2. SAP/counseling support groups	14
3. Individual counseling	5
4. Referral to or collaboration with community resources	4
5. Library materials (books, videos, magazines)	8
6. Integrate with Developmental guidance program	4
7. Development of a needs survey	1
8. Staff inservicing	1
9. Classroom curriculum (using materials that represent family diversity)	10
10. Open communication and discussion in the classroom	4
11. Collaboration with school support staff (school counselor, psychologist, social worker)	1
12. Organize "meetings" for those interested	1
13. Bring in guest speakers	1
14. Cannot discuss gay-related activities in my setting	1
15. I don't know	3
16. Being *personally* supportive to a student (i.e. listen to concerns, answer questions)	1

Based on responses given to Question 8 (see Table 12), it seems clear that an overwhelming majority of respondents are not willing to take *personal* responsibility for supporting students who grow up in a gay or lesbian home. The themes of "support groups," "library materials," "individual counseling," and "referral" were endorsed **31** times and seem to suggest a "someone- (or something) else-can-deal-with-it" attitude. On the other hand, the theme of "School climate" was endorsed five times and the following quotes illustrate this idea: "I am uncertain as to how this support would be different than the support we should be offering all families." ; "Awareness, acknowledgment, acceptance, understanding." ; "Being accepting, supportive, and recognizing their importance in our school setting." ; "Embracing a culture which isn't so fearful of alternatives." ; "Continually working toward building an attitude of the acceptance of differences." Also, the theme of "Open communication in the classroom" was another positive example for becoming more supportive to these students. The following quotes highlight respondents'

endorsements of this theme: "Talking about it more openly." ; "Providing children with enough security to discuss their concerns if they have them." ; "Simply acknowledging that these alternative lifestyles exist."

Table 13: (Question 9, part a): Given That the State of Wisconsin Has a Pupil Non-Discrimination Statute (s.118.3) That Prohibits Discrimination Against K-12 Pupils in the Public Schools, What BARRIERS Do You Perceive to Be in Existence in Your School/District (or Community) That May Make It Difficult to Disseminate Information to Colleagues and Students Regarding Gay and Lesbian Families?

Theme	Frequency
1. Prevailing (negative) attitude in school/school climate (e.g. homophobia)	7
2. Perceived (conservative) attitude in community/perceived pressure and resistance (e.g. value system)	13
3. "Political" barriers, especially in rural school districts	1
4. School board pressure/conservative attitude	3
5. Religious pressures within community	2
6. "Cultural" mores/taboos	2
7. Gay and lesbian students and staff who choose to remain "anonymous" (i.e. stay in the closet)	3
8. Difficulty in obtaining current, accurate, sensitive information	1
9. Lack of specific curriculum in school/school unaware or ignorant of issue	3
10. No barriers perceived	2

The information from Table 13 seems to suggest that educators perceive a plethora of barriers which make it extremely arduous to provide information to colleagues and students regarding gay and lesbian families. Most of these obstacles are apparently localized *outside* of the school (faculty and students) itself-- e.g. "community resistance," "school board pressure," "political barriers," and "religious pressures." Yet, a fair amount of resistance and pressure seems to be contained within the schools as well, as the following quotes vis-à-vis the "School climate" theme (e.g. negative attitudes in school) illustrate: "Colleagues' reactions to information..." ; "Many staff have biased views to lifestyles different from their own."

The degree of pressure from the **community** to keep silent seems quite apparent as the following participants' quotes exemplify: "Parents would be outraged!" ; "We are a small suburban district with few who seem willing to even speak about the subject." ; "There would be community resistance." ; "Denial...

One would be criticized of spending time and money on something that is thought to not exist in our town." ; "Our district is traditional, and I am sure it would be as controversial as sex education." ; "Our district has a very conservative population that challenges texts and is demanding an abstinence-based-only sex education curriculum." ; "Fundamentalist religious views are pervasive in ours and surrounding communities. They have tried to subvert our sex education curriculum efforts."

An additional comment from Table 13 should be made regarding theme #7: "Gay and lesbian students and staff who choose to remain 'anonymous.'" It is disheartening to know that many educators (gay and straight) feel the need to be silent about lesbian- and gay-related issues, as evidenced by the endorsement of this theme by three individuals. This phenomenon occurs for a variety of bigoted and prejudicial reasons: 1. a person may be perceived as a gay or lesbian "recruiter"; 2. a person may be "accused" of being sensitive due to his/her allying of self with an issue that many see as sick and repugnant; and 3. the individual may believe that such action (educating others, being available to listen, etc.) will lead others to discover the individual's homosexual identity. Unfortunately, because much of our society (including our schools) today still does not accept homosexual individuals or endorse homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle that is simply different from a heterosexual lifestyle, remaining "in the closet" is an unhappy reality which both faculty and students feel obligated to choose.

Table 14: (Question 9, part b): Given That the State of Wisconsin Has a Pupil Non-Discrimination Statute (s.118.3) That Prohibits Discrimination Against K-12 Pupils in the Public Schools, What BARRIERS Do You Perceive to Be in Existence in Your School/District (or Community) That May Make It Difficult to Provide Services to Students Who Are Growing up in These Families?

Theme	Frequency
1. Prevailing (negative) attitude in school/school climate	8
2. Perceived (conservative) attitude in community/perceived pressure and resistance	7
3. "Political" barriers, especially in rural school districts	1
4. School board pressure/conservative attitude	1
5. School is unaware of the need	3
6. Difficulty identifying these students and their families	4
7. Non-availability of qualified/sensitive staff	4
8. "Cultural" taboos	1
9. Lack of fiscal resources in school	3
10. Lack of curriculum in school	1
11. No barriers exist: community counseling and/or school's support staff can handle it	6
12. No need to provide these services	1

This is the second part of Question 9, and similar to the first part, it asks respondents to think about specific *barriers* in place that make it difficult to educate the school and community on gay and lesbian families. However, part b is targeted more specifically to providing **services** to those students who are growing up in lesbian and gay families.

A handful of people responding to the questionnaire used the same answer on part b as they did on part a. Hence, some of the themes are identical. As in part a, the theme of "Negative attitude/School climate" was endorsed by many people, as evidenced by the following remarks: "Teacher bias" ; "Staff resistance" ; "Comfort level of staff working with these families" ; "Lack of compassion and sensitivity toward homosexuality" ; "There may be an attitude that [having] materials or open discussion may create some chaos or discomfort."

On the other hand, some new themes emerged from this part of Question 9 that did not surface in part a. For instance, the theme of "Lack of fiscal resources" was endorsed by several respondents: "The perception of teachers/administration of one *more* special need demanding scarce resources." Moreover,

there seemed to be two additional themes that came about to the surprise of the investigator. First, the theme of "No barriers existing" was endorsed by six respondents, as illustrated in the following quote: "If this were done by guidance and privately, I don't think that this would be a problem." Perhaps one must question if whether delegating the responsibility (of helping a group of students) to someone else is the most effective way towards building a caring and supportive school environment.

The other theme that surfaced in part b (of Question 9) was that of "Non-availability of qualified or sensitive staff." The following remarks illustrate this theme: "People with knowledge on how to work with these students." ; "Knowledge of types of support to provide." ; "Most of our counselors would be helpful except for a couple who might not be very accepting." With regards to the last quote, it is interesting to speculate as to why a couple of counselors who "might not be very accepting" are employed as helpers in the first place. Moreover, it would be interesting to follow-up on those individuals who endorsed the theme of "Non-availability of qualified or sensitive staff" to see whether or not these educators have planned staff development and/or sensitivity trainings in their districts to facilitate having more "qualified" and "sensitive" staff in their schools.

Table 15: (Question 10): Regardless of Whether or Not Your School Building, District, Community, etc. Has Students Who Are Growing up in a Family with a Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Parent(s), to What Extent Do YOU Think It's Important to Provide Information to Educate ALL Students about Family Diversity?

Theme	Frequency
1. "To a great extent"; "Important"; "Very important"; "Crucial to educate"	23
2. At least *some* formal instruction necessary	1
3. Somewhat important	2
4. Need to be selective	1
5. Not a priority	1
6. Would not attempt to educate	1

It seems quite evident that a majority (23 out of 29, or 79%) of administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel who responded to Question 10 of the Alternative Families Questionnaire emphatically express the importance of educating all students on family diversity. The following phrases

express this sentiment:

- "It is very important, even though we live in a small community."
- "I went to college not knowing [about diversity] and ended up rooming with a lesbian. No one would date me. I transferred schools."
- "Ignorance breeds hatred, violence, shame, and oppression!"
- "It's a topic with significant meaning to all students."
- "[This topic] is equal to discussion of all other types of family units."
- "Schools need to be sensitive to various family make-ups and be able to address and work with *all* families."
- "I think we need to raise awareness of what's happening in families and acknowledge family variations. Kids should feel comfortable about their family of origin and not have a need to hide issues outside of perceived norms."
- "I think it is vital to provide students with information about all kinds of diversity, though I believe it must go past information to impacting values that encourage acceptance of diversity."

With regards to the aforementioned final quote, it does seem inevitable that in the process of "teaching" about diversity and the need for all students to possess tolerance and respect for those who may be "different" from others, educators may have to push beyond that of providing information and delve into the area of **values**-- discussing and, perhaps, clarifying them-- an area which many parents may feel resistant in having their children explore in school.

Yet there were a handful of educators (six out of 29, or 21%) who endorsed the other five remaining themes that emerged. For example, one individual believed that educating students on diversity is a "selective" process: "I do believe that certain grade levels are more appropriate than others to discuss these issues." Another individual who endorsed the theme of "Somewhat important," responded with: "On a scale of 1 to 10, about 5." (The investigator wonders if this individual has ever been a target of societal oppression.) Yet another educator expressed his/her view on teaching students about family diversity from another vantage point: "I don't see this as a priority. I think it's a family matter." A final response expressed by a participant seems to express a feeling of futility for attempting to teach important, albeit "controversial," matters in the classroom: "I am very interested in cultural pluralism, but having

taught health and 'walked the tight rope' of sex education, I wouldn't touch these issues."

Table 16: (Question 11): In Your Opinion, What Do You Think Would Be Some of the Concerns Facing Children and Teens Who Are Growing up in a Family with One or More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Parents?

Theme	Frequency
1. Alienation from peers and/or members of community (i.e. feelings of isolation)	9
2. Lack of acceptance from teachers, peers, and community	9
3. Questioning one's own sexuality/identity	8
4. Falling short of societal expectation of "family" definition	5
5. AIDS and other attributed stigmas	4
6. Issues related to self-esteem and shame	4
7. Harassment and ridicule from peers	3
8. Child's lack of acceptance or understanding of his/her parents	3
9. Fear of others finding out (i.e. need to maintain family secrecy)	3
10. Stereotyping	3
11. Discrimination directed at child and/or family	2
12. "Role understanding" (i.e. gender-role confusion)	1
13. Repression of feelings	1
14. Family rivalries (i.e. feuding divorced parents and resulting alliances formed between children and parents)	1
15. "How to cope" (i.e. dealing with outside pressure and criticism)	1
16. Role-model shortage	1
17. How to obtain accurate information	1
18. Similar concerns as those shared by children in "typical" families	1
19. "I don't know"	1

Many of the aforementioned themes (see Table 16) parallel several issues that the professional literature addresses when discussing concerns facing children and teens who are growing up with or living in a family with one or more lesbian, bisexual, or gay parents-- e.g. self-esteem & emotional adjustment, societal prejudice, peer ridicule and alienation, family secrecy and isolation from the community, parent-child conflicts, and sexual identity concerns. Moreover, these participants mentioned a number of ideas and concerns that even some of the research rarely addresses, including: "Role model shortage" (theme 16), "How to obtain accurate information" (theme 17), and the idea that this group has "Similar concerns as those shared by children in 'typical' families" (theme 18). One can infer, based upon both the quantity and quality of responses given, that this group of educators appears to be quite sensitive to the difficulties which these students (as well as their families) experience. The following themes (from Table 16), along with some of their respective quotations, emphasize the degree of insight which this sample seems to possess:

Theme	**Examples of Responses**
* Questioning one's own sexual identity	"Is it hereditary?"
* Alienation from peers, community members	"Feeling different." "Having a group to identify with." "Where is *their* support?"
* Lack of acceptance from teachers & peers	"[They're] seen as abnormal." "Feeling accepted by others." "... Especially in a small, rural community."
* Fear of others finding out	"How to keep the 'family secret?'" "Through an experience I had, the children of one family felt they had to hide the fact from other students as well as me."
* Child's lack of acceptance or understanding of his/her parents	"Why are my parents like this?"
* Falling short of societal expectation of "family" definition	"Being ashamed because of social pressures/expectations regarding one's family." "People would always wonder if they're like their parents, especially by their peers." "Fewer opportunities to participate in family-oriented activities because of possible embarrassment."
* Similar concerns as those shared by children in "typical" families	"Many that are shared by children in typical families... money, acceptance, fears, peer pressure, etc."

Table 17: (Question 12): Are You Aware of Any Students in Your School/District/Community Who Have One or More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Parents? If Yes, How Did You Obtain This Information?

Theme	Frequency
A. Aware?	
1. Yes	14
2. No	15
B. If yes, HOW MANY students (families) do you know?	
1. One student	8
2. Two students of same family	1
3. More than one family	3
4. Did not indicate	2
C. Source of knowledge?	
1. Student's self-disclosure	3
2. Comments by other staff/ word of mouth	3
3. Via school social worker, psychologist, counselor	2
4. Via personal association with student's family	2
5. Via parental disclosure of identified student	1
6. Via speaking with other gay/ lesbian individuals	1
7. "Eye witness" account	1
8. "The rumor mill"	1

It is interesting to note, based upon the responses from the questionnaire, that nearly *half* of the sample of administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel report being aware of students in their school/district/community who have one or more gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents. Even more striking are the statistics that result from combining the factors of **awareness** with **town/city classification** of one's school district:

Table 18: Comparison of Factors of Awareness of Students with a Gay or Lesbian Parent and Classification of Town/City Which School District Reside

Aware of Students Who Have a Homosexual Parent?	Classification of Town/City Which School District Resides		
	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Yes	10	0	4
No	4	4	7

From looking at Table 18, it is apparent that it is the **"rural"** group of educators (those individuals whose school districts are considered to be in a rural locale) who report knowing the most number of students (a total of 10) who are either growing up with or living in a family in which one or more parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The other groups, comprised of "suburban" and "urban" educators, report knowing fewer students (zero students and four students, respectively) than do the "rural" educators. One does need to be cautious of making group comparisons with these data, however, as the groups of rural, suburban, and urban educators are unequal in size to begin with: the rural group of educators comprise the largest group of the three (N=14 rural group, N=4 suburban group, N=11 urban group). It would be worth further investigation to conduct a study with *equal* numbers of educators representing these three types of locales, and then compare the numbers of students from gay and lesbian families of whom the educators are aware.

Nonetheless, when one focuses *solely* on the "rural" group of educators, nearly three-fourths (71%) of this group reports knowing a student who has a gay or lesbian parent. This is a *significant* finding, in light of many people's (mis)perceptions that rural communities lack the kind of family diversity most people associate with more populated, urban communities. Thus, when comments are made such as, "I am sure that we don't have families of 'that' type... We are, after all, a small, rural district," educators need to realize that family diversity (as well as diversity of any human trait or behavior) has **no** geographical boundaries. (The aforementioned quotation was made by an elementary school librarian in the earlier pilot study. This was her reply given after the investigator had asked if her library had any books that depict gay and lesbian families.)

A final note regarding the themes in Table 17. With regards to *how* educators gain access to their information vis-à-vis students who have gay or lesbian parents, there appears to be several avenues. Surprisingly, "Student self-disclosure" ranked highest and was endorsed by three of the 14 educators who are aware of these students. It seems that such disclosures occur within the setting of a counseling session at school, perhaps in an atmosphere in which the student feels safe and is aware of privacy and confidentiality issues: "Information gathered during a psychoeducational evaluation I conducted." ; "Via a personal counseling request from the school counselor, psychologist, and the student." ; "Through a counseling experience."

Other sources by which educators report being privy to such information include: "eye-witness" accounts (e.g. "I saw it when I dropped the children off after an activity at their home."); the "rumor-mill" (e.g. "I am aware of a situation where a mother just left her home for another woman. It was a rumor!"); as well as via "word of mouth" from other school staff (e.g. "The school secretary knows the family and told me."). Another educator shared that s/he, in fact, does know of one student who has a gay father, yet it seems that in her statement to justify her knowledge of the situation, she may have inadvertently confused the concepts of "sexual orientation" with that of "transvestism" or "transsexualism": "One boy whose dad is a cross-dresser-- wants to have an operation to become 'Rene.'"

Chapter V: Summary, Implications, and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

With respect to the findings for elementary and middle school libraries, it is disappointing to realize that none of the 10 participating school districts have *any* of the seven fiction/picture books (explicitly) depicting gay and lesbian families. Rather, the books that some of these librarians/media specialists do report having on their shelves are those which either mention gay and lesbian families within a context of discussing other types of alternative families (i.e. the non-fiction/family books), or those which feature families "headed" by two women (e.g. the Trina Schart Hyman and Vera B. Williams stories).

In contrast to a previously performed pilot study (in which the investigator surveyed elementary school librarians and media specialists for gay and lesbian family books, via telephone-- conducted in November, 1991), it seemed somewhat more difficult to gain "idiosyncratic" data from the current sample of librarians, as this group reported their data on a written questionnaire. Based upon the few sets of comments that were written, however, there seemed to be a fair amount of support for students gaining access to these books on their school libraries' shelves.

There were three salient features of this *previous* pilot librarian study that came to the surface that deserve mentioning in this document. First, some of the librarians conveyed to the investigator the attitude: "We don't have them [children who have gay and lesbian parents] here at our school, so why should we provide books that depict them?" One rural school librarian, in particular, who voiced such an attitude (by suggesting that an interested individual should try the school library in City X-- a larger town -- for "those" books) would be wise to consider the **true** meaning of integration and inclusive education-- where children learn about **everybody's** livelihoods, not just of those who walk through the front doors of the town hall. Second, some of these librarians seemed to go out of their way in their communication (on the telephone) so as to avoid verbalizing words such as "homosexuality," "lesbian," and "gay." As such, it

seems that when individuals are reluctant to use words from our language to identify ideas, people, or even anatomy, for example (i.e. words such as "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexuality"), and instead choose to use euphemistic labels such as "those people," "that subject," "that area," "families of that type," or "drastic" (referring to "those" books), one gains an appreciation of the covert process for how children pick up on (and, in turn, internalize) adults' own sense of embarrassment, discomfort, or perhaps repugnance of those ideas and/or people that are unfamiliar to them. Virginia Casper and her colleagues (1992) *encourage* school officials to be open and honest in their terminology regarding homosexuality: "Teachers must know that using these words will not cause homosexuality, and that they are not inappropriate to use with young children. The argument that one should not talk about lesbian and gay people because it might promote a gay sexual orientation in children is itself biased, because it assumes that it is not a good thing to be gay."

Finally, in regards to the aforementioned pilot study, one librarian shared with the investigator, that although his (urban) elementary school library carried several of the titles that depict gay and lesbian families, students could not check these books out on their *own*, and the books themselves were shelved in obscure places within the library. (This information lead the investigator to design the *current* "Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists" with space to indicate a book's "accessibility-to-students" status, along with space to comment on how such books are shelved with respect to other family books.) But what good does it do if a student can't even check out a book by him/herself, and must, instead, ask for it from a teacher? Might the child feel enough embarrassment as it is? Moreover, how likely is it that a student who is looking (in a serendipitous manner) for books about families is going to find a book (that depicts something similar to his/her familial experience) when the book is shelved in a section of the library labelled "PROBLEM BOOKS"? What kind of message does this send to children when they see books about gay and lesbian families sitting right next to other books about alcoholism and child abuse? *Whose* truths are our educators using to teach today's students?

With respect to the responses given on the "Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel," it appears that these educators do have some insight

into, as well as understanding and sensitivity of, the needs of this group of students. These educators may even be willing and/or able to both extend services to these students, in particular, as well as expand curriculum (to include **all** types of family diversity) for **all** students, in general. As some had suggested on the questionnaire, it is apparent that **all** students would certainly benefit by learning about gay and lesbian families-- to help dispel myths and prejudices and instead promote understanding and foster sensitivity and respect for people whose backgrounds are different.

It seems that two points from this part of the investigation bear repeating. First is the observation that many of the educators in this sample, when asked to think about the types of services that *can* be provided to children of gay and lesbian families, endorsed the themes of support groups, individual counseling, and referral to community resources. These are fine sources of support, in and of themselves, but seem to shift the responsibility, of personally reaching out to a group of students, onto another party. Only **one** person from this group of educators responded with a statement conveying the idea of being "*[personally]* supportive to a student" (by listening to concerns and answering questions).

Second, it appears that despite the beliefs that many educators (and parents) in rural settings may have about their schools/communities not having students who have gay or lesbian parents, the findings from this investigation show otherwise. Of the 14 rural educators who participated in the current investigation, 10 of them reported knowing at least one student in their district who has one or more parents who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Implications

Despite some of the limitations of this study (e.g. a **select** sample-- i.e. not random-- whose participants-- composed of administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel-- were *all* from higher education courses; districts not evenly represented with respect to type of locale--urban, suburban, and rural; and a relatively small sample of librarians, making it difficult to generalize these particular findings), this investigation does seem to suggest the need for school districts to take more of an

initiative in advocating and providing services to meet the needs of children who live in a family with a gay or lesbian parent. Creating awareness amongst **everybody** in the school community-- teachers, students, parents-- is a good place to begin. Creating a safe environment that fosters **open** communication (and allows for experiences like "values clarification" exercises, for example) is another. Having picture books depicting gay and lesbian families available to school children is yet another way to recognize and validate this familial experience for *all* kids. As Corbett (1993) asks, "How must the scores of children living with gay parents feel, never to see any representation of their lives in any book, any song, or any television program?"

It is apparent, however, that *administrators* must also take the initiative in taking steps *beyond* promoting awareness and fostering a safe school climate by providing **services** to these children, as well as to their families. Administrators must begin to act congruently with their school's inclusive educational philosophy. Children of lesbian and gay families have the need and **right** to be included in **all** ways at school and in the community. It is suggested that it is the role of the *administrator* to develop this plan of action. Villa and Thousand, as cited by Stainback and Stainback (1990), assert that in most school systems:

> The educational administrator is the one who is responsible for publicly articulating the philosophy or mission of the school district and assuring that the actions of the teachers, support personnel, and students are congruent with this philosophy. Thus, the educational administrator is in a position to deliberately or incidentally shape the organizational structure of a school and the values of the school community; and these structures and values may facilitate or thwart the school's capacity to meet the needs of all students in general education environments.

Perhaps it is the conveyed attitude (and behavior) of a school's administration that can set the tone for the rest of the school's staff and students to follow. What better way for a classroom teacher to learn about reaching out to meet the needs of children and their gay and lesbian parents than by having appropriate attitudes and behaviors **modelled** to them by the school principal? Administrators need to *view* gay and lesbian couples as "valid" parenting units, *convey* this attitude to their staff, and *encourage* these parents' participation in **all** aspects of their children's education. James Clay (1990) points to the necessity of the school's administration to support gay and lesbian families: "Administrators must realize that gay and lesbian parents exist, and that they need to be treated with the same respect shown to other

parents. In fact, like single parents, they may require a little extra support."

The following is a brief outline of **considerations** for administrators, librarians, school counselors, and all other educators to think about when reaching out and providing services to children (as well as their parents) from gay and lesbian families:

A. With respect to the issue of **peer ridicule and alienation** at school:

1. What are your **own** views regarding homosexuality, in general, and gay & lesbian couples as valid parenting units, in particular?

2. What can you do to arrest homophobic slurs directed to students (or directed at anyone else at school, for that matter)?

3. How can you help to **educate** students and colleagues about family diversity?

    - promoting self as "pro-diversity" (buttons, posters on office and classroom doors and walls, books on shelves, etc.)
    - conducting staff inservices & sensitivity trainings
    - having speakers from the community come to talk with staff, students, parents
    - using classroom and library materials which use inclusive language, addressing alternative families of all sorts
    - dispensing educational materials to **all** students, parents, and school staff

B. With regards to the issue of **family secrecy and isolation from the community:**

1. What can you do to reach out to these students and their families?

    - encourage **participation** of identified parent(s) in **all** aspects of their child's/children's education (e.g. PTA, school conferences, field trips, extra-curricular activities, fund-raisers)
    - form **support groups**, or refer out to the community for additional support-- to children as well as to their parents (i.e. help alleviate the feelings of "I'm the only one")
    - *listen* to a student who may simply just want to talk/vent with somebody. *Ask* him/her how you can be of help.

C. In relation to the issue of **parent-child relationships:**

1. Realize that children may be dealing with *grief* and *loss* issues from a possible parental divorce in the family.

• divorce issues	Do you know how to deal with this area?
• loss/grief issues	How can you help a child become "re-acquainted" with his/her gay/lesbian parent? How can you help someone *let go* of past dreams or unfulfilled expectations?
• adoption issues	"Who are my 'real' parents?" "Why did they give me up?"

D. With respect to **sexual identity issues:**

1. Be honest with your own feelings, and at the same time let child realize that you care, support, and will serve as the child's advocate... always!

2. If you are not comfortable talking about sexuality with a student, find another colleague who is.

3. **Remember...** The mind operates similar to that of a parachute... they both work best when they are OPEN!

Conclusions

In summary, it goes without saying that children who have a lesbian or gay parent need a great deal of support from a variety of people and places: the mental health field, community organizations, siblings, parents, relatives, peers, and most especially from the school community itself. Children spend up to one-third of their day at school; it is a powerful and influential learning environment that is chock-filled with role models (some positive and some not) who (consciously aware or not) help to mold and sculpt children's impressionable thoughts, values, and opinions. All school staff have a responsibility and obligation to help meet the personal, academic, emotional, as well as the social needs of every single student with whom they come into contact. For a school to realize its philosophy of striving towards inclusive schooling, **everyone**-- classroom teachers, custodians, aids, lunch/playground crews, pupil-services personnel, librarians, bus drivers, volunteers, and especially administrators-- must pitch in, for it requires a true *team* effort.

Due to the limited size and scope of this investigation, further research on a much broader scale is necessary to verify, modify, and/or refute the findings presented here. Researchers can perhaps obtain information on what schools in other parts of the country are doing to help meet the needs of children who are growing up with a gay or lesbian parent(s). What, for example, are elementary school administrators, classroom teachers, and librarians on the West Coast or in the South doing to reach out and provide services to these students? Moreover, there is a great need for future research to be conducted vis-à-vis those families with gay fathers, as many investigators have studied families with one or two lesbian parents. How, for example, is the family experience different for a child growing up with one gay father

versus *two* gay fathers, or what's it like for a child who grows up with lesbian mothers, compared to life with gay fathers?

Perhaps the bottom line for these kids, with respect to their own personal, social, emotional, and academic development, has much *less* to do with the sexual orientation of their parent(s) and much *more* to do with both the parent's and school's ability to provide what these children are needing... unconditional love, support, acceptance, dependability, respect, and trust. If the gay or lesbian parent really loves his/her child, is in tune with the **child's** needs, concerns, and issues (rather than dwelling on his/her own), and is someone that this child can count on... If a child who has a gay or lesbian parent feels recognized, cared for, respected, and supported by his/her teachers and friends at school-- then does it really matter *who* that parent chooses to hold hands with while watching TV?

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Appendices

1. Cover letter for librarians/media specialists (explaining nature of the investigation)
2. "Notice" explaining *voluntary* participation of the investigation-- for librarians/media specialists
3. Alternative Families Questionnaire for Librarians and Media Specialists
4. *We Are Family: Recommended Books for Children Living in Lesbian and Gay Families* (A bibliography distributed to both administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel **and** librarians/media specialists.) Note: Bibliography has been reprinted with permission from the author.
5. Reminder notices for librarians/media specialists to return questionnaires
6. Cover letter for administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel (explaining nature of the investigation)
7. "Notice" explaining *voluntary* participation of the investigation-- for administrators, classroom teachers, and pupil-services personnel
8. Alternative Families Questionnaire for Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel

April 30, 1992

Dear school/ district librarian/media specialist,

I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the department of counseling psychology and counselor education. Currently, I am doing research for my master's thesis that addresses the various academic and psychosocial needs of students from minority family groups. Specifically, I have chosen to focus on children who are growing up and living in a family in which one (or both) of the parents is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Since a child's cultural reality (from any minority group) can be validated through identification with those family constellations depicted in certain books (fictional and non), I am investigating the availability of specific library books whose words and pictures "speak" to these particular students.

Please take a few minutes **now** to complete the attached questionnaire. You will find it to be clear and straightforward. For each of the fourteen book titles, simply indicate (by checking the one appropriate box) the book's **location** as well as its **accessibility** to students. Under the "location" heading, you will reply with one of three possible responses:

possibility 1-- book is available in building library
possibility 2-- book is available in district or CESA
possibility 3-- book is not available

Under the "accessibility to students" heading, you will reply with one of three possible responses:

possibility 1-- book is accessible directly to students for check out
possibility 2-- book is accessible to students but only through staff member recommendation
possibility 3-- book is accessible to staff only (not students)

I have provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of this questionnaire. Please complete and return it **NO LATER** than Friday, May 8, 1992. Your prompt attention and response are greatly appreciated. Be assured that any information that you provide is kept confidential and anonymous, as no names of individuals or schools are to be provided. The number in the top, right-hand corner of the questionnaire is to be used for purposes of data analyses only (this number corresponds to an identical number on a questionnaire completed by an administrator or pupil-services staff member from your school building/district). Please note that there is a designated space on page 2 of the questionnaire for any comments that you may wish to share.

In return for the favor, I have provided you with a copy of an excellent bibliography that gives a thorough list of books regarding family diversity, with an emphasis on gay and lesbian families. I hope this is a helpful resource for your library system.

Thank you for your attention, information, and time. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Rubin

Steven A. Rubin
Master's Student

NOTICE

Your response to this questionnaire is voluntary.

In no way are you obligated to participate in this research.

Alternative Families Questionnaire

(Librarians and Media Specialists)

Instructions: Please fill out this form to the best of your ability. For each title, indicate **ONE** response (placing an "x" in the appropriate box) for its **location** and **ONE** response for its **accessibility** to students. If you have any comments that you wish to share, feel free to do so on page 2 in the space designated "comments." Please return the questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope NO LATER than Friday, May 8, 1992. Remember, all responses will be kept completely confidential.

Please indicate the grade level(s) which your library serves:_____

	LOCATION			ACCESSIBILITY to Students		
	Building Library	District or CESA	Not Available	Student Check Out	Staff Recomm	Staff Only
I. Fiction/Picture Books						
Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin Susanne Bosche	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asha's Mums Rosamund Elwin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My Crazy Sister M.B. Goffstein	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self Portrait: Trina Schart Hyman Trina Schart Hyman	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Heather Has Two Mommies Leslea Newman	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lots of Mommies Jan Severance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When Megan Went Away Jan Severance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Daddy's Roommate Michael Willhoite	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe Vera B. Williams	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	LOCATION			ACCESSIBILITY to Students		
	Building Library	District or CESA	Not Available	Student Check Out	Staff Recomm	Staff Only
II. Non-Fiction/Family Books						
Your Family, My Family Joan Drescher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love Aylette Jenness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chag Sameach! Patricia Schaffer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How Babies & Families Are Made (There Is More Than One Way!) Patricia Schaffer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Families Meredith Tax	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

QUESTION: If you do have some of these tiles in your school/district library, WHERE are these books shelved with respect to other books?

COMMENTS:

W E A R E F A M I L Y :

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN LESBIAN AND GAY FAMILIES

Compiled by Kathleen T. Horning
for the Madison Gay and Lesbian Resource Center
Madison, Wisconsin
November 1990

While gay themes have been present in teen literature for the past 20 years, lesbian and gay families are still for the most part taboo in picture books for preschoolers and in books for elementary school-aged children. For children who live in lesbian/gay families, it is a challenge to find books that reflect something of their experiences. A few picture books specifically dealing with lesbian/gay families have been published by alternative presses over the past several years in an attempt to fill the gap left by the mainstream commercial presses.

That is not to say that we cannot find other good books to share with our children. There are many wonderful picture books which feature single-parent families with strong mothers, loving fathers and independent, individual children; books which create a lively, engaging world from which children of lesbian/gay parents will not feel excluded. You can find most of the books listed here in your local public library.

This bibliography is divided into 6 content areas: books which are explicitly or implicitly lesbian or gay (including books on women-only space); books which feature single mothers; books which feature single fathers; nonfiction books which include lesbian or gay families; books for young children about AIDS; and books dealing with sex roles, sexual identity and positive self-images.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BOOKS WHICH ARE EXPLICITLY LESBIAN OR GAY

Bosche, Susanne. JENNY LIVES WITH ERIC AND MARTIN. Photographs by Andreas Hansen. Gay Men's Press, 1983.
A photo-narrative about the day-to-day life of a young Danish girl living with her two dads. Although Eric and Martin appear to have complete responsibility for their daughter, Jenny's mother Karen appears early in the book as a comfortable and welcome guest at a family birthday celebration for Eric. A brief scene with a homophobic neighbor is particularly well handled. Overall, a wonderfully candid and realistic portrayal of a gay family. (Ages 4-7)

Elwin, Rosamund and Michele Grace Paulse. ASHA'S MUMS. Illustrated by Dawn Lee. Women's Press, 1990.
Asha faces a challenge when both her mothers sign a permission form so that she can take a class trip to the Science Centre and her teacher wants to know which one is her real mother. "Both," Asha answers honestly. Asha and her mums all find ways to explain their family situation to curious classmates and a grudgingly accepting teacher. In terms of literary and artistic quality, child appeal and age-appropriate explanations, this is undoubtedly the best picture book yet on lesbian/gay families. Asha and her mothers are African-American. (Ages 4-7)

Newman, Leslea. HEATHER HAS TWO MOMMIES. Illustrated by Diana Souza. In Other Words, 1989.
Three-year old Heather was conceived through alternative insemination, so having two mothers does not seem at all out of the ordinary to her until she begins attending a children's playgroup and meets children with fathers. (Ages 4-6)

Severance, Jan. LOTS OF MOMMIES. Illustrated by Jan Jones. Lollipop Power, 1983.
On the first day of school, the other kids laugh at Emily when she announces she has lots of mommies, until a playground emergency brings all four of her mothers to her assistance. An unusual account of a child living in a womyn's collective. (Ages 3-6)

Severance, Jan. WHEN MEGAN WENT AWAY. Illustrated by Tea Schook. Lollipop Power, 1979.
Shannon and her mother both feel sad and angry after mom's lover, Megan, moves out of their home. The first children's picture book to deal openly with a lesbian/gay family seems a little bit dated by contemporary standards. (Ages 4-7)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Willhoite, Michael. DADDY'S ROOMMATE. Alyson, 1990.
Full-color, cartoon illustrations accompany a brief text in which a boy describes what weekend life is like with his dad and his dad's lover, Frank. An upbeat, positive portrayal of a situation common to many kids with gay fathers. (Ages 4-7)

Special Mention (though not explicitly lesbian, the following books feature families headed by two women)

Goffstein, M.B. MY CRAZY SISTER. Dial, 1976.
The life of a quiet single woman is forever changed when her free-spirited sister moves in with her baby. Although the two women are referred to throughout the story as "sisters," they sleep in the same bed and one wears men's clothes to play up her resemblance to her personal hero, Amelia Earhart. (Ages 3-7)

(Unfortunately, this delightful book is out of print and difficult to find. The stories from it are retold by Diane Wolkstein on a children's audiocassette, ROMPING: STORIES AND SONGS by Diane Wolkstein and Shirley Keller, Cloudstone Music, c1986. The CRAZY SISTER stories are interspersed with folksongs, one of which is about Amelia Earhart's last flight.)

Hyman, Trina Schart. SELF-PORTRAIT: TRINA SCHART HYMAN.
Addison-Wesley, 1981.
A visual autobiography by one of the best-known and most highly regarded illustrators in contemporary children's literature. Although Hyman does not use the word "lesbian" in the text, neither does she obscure the fact that she and her daughter have lived with a series of women over the past twenty years. (Ages 6-9)

Williams, Vera B. THREE DAYS ON A RIVER IN A RED CANOE.
Greenwillow, 1981.
In what is undoubtedly the closest that mainstream publishing has ever come to presenting a lesbian family in a picture book, here two women and two children (a boy and a girl) take a weekend canoe and camping trip. Although one of the women is referred to as "Aunt Rosie," lesbian families will feel at home in this story in which the children take an active role in helping out with pitching the tent, hauling the canoe and preparing (vegetarian!) meals. They even remember to bring a fish to their cat when they ultimately return to a home which the four characters apparently share. (Ages 4-8)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Women-Only Space (likely to be an issue in lesbian households, the following picture books deal with this concept)

Caines, Jeannette. JUST US WOMEN. Illustrated by Pat Cummings. Harper & Row, 1982.
An African-American girl and her aunt take a leisurely car trip, moseying down backroads, stopping at roadside markets, and eating breakfast at night. The story begins and ends with Aunt Martha's special stipulation for the trip: "No boys and no men, just us women."
(Ages 4-7)

Grifalconi, Ann. VILLAGE OF ROUND AND SQUARE HOUSES. Little, Brown, 1986.
A contemporary story, set in a village in Tos, Cameroon, where the women and men have separate living areas, marked off by the shapes of their houses. Gran'ma Tika tells a young girl how this came to be and why it continues. Her reason, simply stated, is that the women like to be together, "to talk and to laugh and to sing," and that the men have gotten used to it. Author/ illustrator Grifalconi traveled to Tos where this village actually exists to research the story. (Ages 4-7)

BOOKS WHICH FEATURE SINGLE MOTHERS

Griffith, Helen V. GRANDADDY'S PLACE. Illustrated by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1987.
A picture book with five short chapters recounts Janetta's first meeting with her grandfather when she and her mother take a train trip to visit him. As a city child, Janetta is initially wary of the rural environment she's thrust into but as she gets to know her grandaddy better she begins to feel more and more at home. Like Janetta, her grandfather has a wild imagination and loves to tell tall tales. (Ages 4-8)

Hughes, Shirley. ALFIE GETS IN FIRST. Lothrop, 1981.
Three-year-old Alfie, his mom and baby sister have just returned home from a shopping trip. Alfie is so excited about being the first one to reach home that, after Mom has unlocked the door and as she is turning to take Annie Rose from her stroller, he runs inside and slams the door, locking his mom and sister outside and himself inside. Hughes has cleverly placed the closed door at the center of each double-page spread so that we see Alfie's actions and reactions on the right-hand side of the page and Mom with an ever-increasing assortment of helpful neighbors on the left-hand side. Alfie belongs to a white working-class British family living in a multicultural neighborhood and his wonderful, unflappable Mom is fat and wears glasses, blue jeans and boots.
(Ages 3-5)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Hughes, Shirley. ALFIE GIVES A HAND. Lothrop, 1983.
Alfie is reluctant to leave the security of his home to attend a neighborhood birthday party. After some coaxing from Mom, he agrees to go so long as he can take his blanket with him. The rather obnoxious birthday boy, Bernard, frightens and fascinates Alfie with his less than gracious behavior as host and Alfie continues to clutch his blanket until he decides to put it down so that he can extend a hand to another party guest who's even more terrified of Bernard than Alfie is. Hughes lovingly and realistically captures a preschooler's first steps toward independence and identity within a community outside the home. (Ages 3-5)

Jonas, Ann. THE TREK. Greenwillow, 1985.
After saying good-bye to her mom, a young girl turns her walk to school into a marvelous adventure. "My mother doesn't walk me to school anymore," she says. "But she doesn't know we live on the edge of a jungle." The biracial (African-American/white) protagonist and her Asian friend transform ordinary city streets into an exciting wilderness by imagining the shapes of elephants in tree trunks, giraffes in a stone chimney, a rhinocerous in the side of a building, etc. Children love to pick out the shapes of the multitude of animals they can see hidden in an urban setting. (Ages 3-8)

Loewen, Iris. MY MOM IS SO UNUSUAL. Illustrated by Alan Pakarnyk. Pemmican, 1986.
A Metis girl lovingly describes all of the things that make her mom different from other mothers she knows: the way she dresses, the way she expresses herself, and her fondness for turning up the radio REALLY LOUD and dancing to rock music, to name just a few. One of the very few picture books featuring a contemporary American Indian family, this comes from a Native-owned small press. (Ages 3-6)

O'Donnell, Elizabeth Lee. MAGGIE DOESN'T WANT TO MOVE. Illustrated by Amy Schwartz. Four Winds, 1987.
Simon, a school-aged boy, projects all of the reservations he has about moving to another neighborhood onto his infant sister, Maggie. While the moving company is loading all of his household possessions into the van, Simon loads his sister into a red wagon and takes her over to his best friend's house to discuss "Maggie's problem" with his best friend's mom. Both Simon's mom and his best friend's mom (who is African-American) wear their hair short and sport Birkies and New Age-style clothing that looks as though it was ordered from Travis Place. And Simon's new teacher is -- surprise! -- a man, a counter-culture type described by the kids as "the neatest teacher in the whole school." (Ages 3-7)

Rossner, Ruth. ARRABA GAH ZEE, MARISSA AND ME. Albert Whitman, 1987.
"No one's as good at playing as Marissa," says the white protagonist of her African-American friend. The vitality of the two girls' imaginative play and the pictures of everyday apartment-house living create a rare, fresh and natural tone. As the two girls play, their mothers are seen throughout in the background, engaged in a lively conversation of their own, suggesting that they, too, are best friends. (Ages 3-6)

Schwartz, Amy. OMA AND BOBO. Bradbury, 1987.
A lovable, disobedient dog is added to a household comprised of Alice, her mother and her grandmother. Alice fails miserably in her attempts to train Bobo the dog, for Bobo has a mind of his own. But when Alice's crotchety, German-speaking Grandma undertakes Bobo's training herself, she gets good results. (Ages 3-7)

Williams, Vera B. A CHAIR FOR MY MOTHER. Greenwillow, 1982.
A tender picture story involves three generations of an urban working class family. Young Rosa lives with her mother and grandmother and, for months, the three of them drop spare change into a huge glass jar to save up money for a comfortable chair so that Mama can relax when she comes home from her hard day's work as a waitress. The beautiful, overstuffed chair they eventually choose to buy is covered with bright red roses, a decision Williams consciously made because roses symbolize women's love. (Ages 4-8)

Williams, Vera B. SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR ME. Greenwillow, 1983.
In a sequel to A CHAIR FOR MY MOTHER, now it's Rosa's turn to spend the change her family has saved to fill the big glass jar in their kitchen. Rosa considers roller skates, new clothes, and a knapsack before she makes her final choice: an accordian. (Ages 4-8)

Williams, Vera B. MUSIC, MUSIC FOR EVERYONE. Greenwillow, 1984.
In the final volume of the CHAIR trilogy, Rosa and her three girlfriends form a musical band and practice hard so that they can perform at a neighborhood block party. A visual celebration of both racial and familial diversity from start to finish, culminating in a beautiful, wordless double-page spread of all the neighbors dancing (look for Rosa's mother -- she's dancing with another woman). Like all of the books in the trilogy, this has as a central theme love among women through bonds of family and friendship. (Ages 4-8)

Books featuring strong, nontraditional grandmothers

Goffstein, M.B. FISH FOR SUPPER. Dial, 1976.
Every morning Grandmother gets up at five o'clock, eats a quick breakfast, and rows out onto the lake so that she can catch fish for her supper. A charming portrait of an independent, self-sufficient woman. (Ages 3-5)

Grifalconi, Ann. DARKNESS AND THE BUTTERFLY. Little, Brown, 1987.
In a story which appears to have the same setting as VILLAGE OF ROUND AND SQUARE HOUSES (see above), little Osa seems fearless when playing during the day but at night she's afraid of the dark. Strong, vividly colored images and an abundance of curving lines convey security within the story of Osa's visit to the Wise Woman who enables Osa to overcome her fear. (Ages 4-8)

Hedderwick, Mairi. KATIE MORAG AND THE TWO GRANDMOTHERS. Little, Brown, 1985.
Katie Morag lives with her mom, dad and baby brother on a tiny island off the coast of Scotland. Nearby lives her rugged grandmother, called Grannie Island to distinguish her from Katie Morag's more traditional, feminine grandmother, Grannie Mainland. "Oh, her and her fancy ways!" says Grannie Island of Grannie Mainland. But Katie Morag and Grannie Island come to value Grannie Mainland's perfume, powder and hair curlers when they find that these items come in handy for getting their sheep ready for the annual sheep show. (Ages 3-6)

Hedlund, Irene. MIGHTY MOUNTAIN AND THE THREE STRONG WOMEN. Volcano Press, 1990.
Mighty Mountain is so strong that when he walks, people for miles around can feel the earth shake. Everyone thinks he's a shoe-in for first prize in the Emperor's wrestling match to determine the strongest man in Japan. Everyone, that is, but the family of three rural women he meets on his way to the match. Grandma, in particular, takes pity on Mighty Mountain and personally undertakes his training for the match. With Grandma's expert coaching, Mighty Mountain is able to build up his strength and easily win the match. A marvelous retelling of the traditional Japanese folktale. (Ages 4-8)

Moore, Elaine. GRANDMA'S HOUSE. Illustrated by Elise Primavera. Lothrop, 1985.
For Kim, summer is a special time that she shares each year with her grandmother, a strong, active woman who wears levis and drives a pickup truck and is definitely the dykiest grandma in picture books. The same two characters are also featured in GRANDMA'S PROMISE (Lothrop, 1988). (Ages 3-6)

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BOOKS WHICH FEATURE SINGLE FATHERS

Bang, Molly. THE PAPER CRANE. Greenwillow, 1985.
The lives of a restaurant owner and his son are changed forever when a kind stranger accepts a free meal from them. To show his gratitude for their generosity, the stranger folds a paper crane, then plays his flute to bring the bird to life. Bang has brilliantly illustrated the story with full-color collages, the perfect medium for a story about paper coming to life. (Ages 4-8)

Bang, Molly. TEN, NINE, EIGHT. Greenwillow, 1983.
An African-American father rocks his infant daughter to sleep with a counting rhyme which names things in the child's bedroom: ten toes, seven shoes, five buttons, etc. A sense of intimacy and security comes through both the familiarity of the setting and Bang's warm full-color gouache paintings. (Birth-age 3)

Baum, Louis. I WANT TO SEE THE MOON. Illustrated by Niki Daly. Overlook Press, 1989.
When two-year-old Toby wakes up in the middle of the night, his daddy provides him with the usual late-night comforts -- a drink of water, a trip to the bathroom, a glass of warm milk -- but Toby won't go back to sleep until his dad takes him outside to look at the moon. A gentle portrayal of a loving, tender relationship between a father and his young son. (Ages 2-4)

Baum, Louis. ONE MORE TIME. Illustrated by Paddy Bouma. William Morrow, 1986.
Little Simon and his dad share a special time together on a train, reading stories, eating a snack, looking out the window. Simon enjoys each activity, asking (in a typical toddler way) to repeat whatever they've just done. At the book's end, readers see that Simon and his dad have been on their way to take Simon back to his mother's house, and dad leaves him with the promise that they'll do everything "one more time" the following weekend. (Ages 2-4)

Browne, Anthony. GORILLA. Knopf, 1985.
Right before her eyes, a toy stuffed gorilla that Hannah's dad gave her for her seventh birthday turns into a real gorilla and, together, Hannah and the gorilla celebrate her birthday with a midnight outing to the zoo, the movies and an ice cream parlor. Children delight in finding the subtle gorilla images hidden throughout the illustrations and perceptive readers will notice that the amiable gorilla bears an uncanny resemblance to Hannah's father. (Ages 4-9)

Eichler, Margrit. MARTIN'S FATHER. Illustrated by Bev Magennis. Lollipop Power, 1971.
Martin has the best father in the world. His dad cooks him breakfast, plays hide-and-seek with him, lets him help with the

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laundry and gives him a bath at night. This was a ground-breaking book at the time it was published as it was one of the first picture books to show a nurturing father with sole responsibility for his child and it still holds up to contemporary standards. (Ages 2-4)

Jam, Teddy. NIGHT CARS. Illustrated by Eric Beddows. Orchard, 1989.
With so much going on on the busy street outside the apartment, it's hard for a restless baby to go to sleep. Luckily, Dad is there to walk the floors with him, holding him up to the window to see all the passing cars and trucks. The many moods of a now drowsy, now wakeful baby are captured in the full-color illustrations which also depict nighttime city scenes as views from a second-story window. (Ages 18 months-3 years)

Ormerod, Jan. DAD'S BACK; MESSY BABY; READING; SLEEPING. Lothrop, 1985.
Each of these four nearly wordless books for toddlers affectionately shows interactions between a father and his baby. In SLEEPING a playful baby crawls all over his sleeping dad and similarly diverts his attention from a book in READING. Baby plays with Dad's keys, gloves and scarf after Dad returns from an errand in DAD'S BACK and in MESSY BABY Dad tidies up the house while the baby follows him, undoing all his work. (Birth-2 years)

Say, Allen. THE LOST LAKE. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
An Asian-American boy spending the summer with his dad quickly tires of reading and watching television and finally talks his dad into taking him camping. Their week-long trip together yields new self-knowledge for the boy and reveals another dimension of his dad's interests, particularly his strongly expressed concerns about crowded recreation areas. (Ages 4-9)

Steptoe, John. DADDY IS A MONSTER... SOMETIMES. Lippincott, 1980.
An African-American brother and sister talk candidly about the times their Daddy has been angry at them, times when he seems like a scary monster to them. Throughout the story, Daddy is shown as having complete responsibility for Bweela and Javaka, giving them their meals, tucking them in at night, nagging them to clean their rooms, etc. Stunning illustrations and psychological realism are the hallmark's of Steptoe's picture books. The honesty with which he portrays both children and adults give his characters a tenderness, without the least hint of sweetness or sentimentality. Steptoe, who published his first book when he was sixteen and was the first author to write children's books in Black English, died from AIDS in 1988. (Ages 4-8)

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NONFICTION BOOKS WHICH INCLUDE LESBIAN/GAY FAMILIES

Drescher, Joan. YOUR FAMILY, MY FAMILY. Walker, 1980.
A young narrator talks about all the different kinds of families living in her neighborhood, including that of her friend Peggy: "Margo and Rita are Peggy's family. Although Margo is her real mother, Peggy feels as if she has two mothers. That's twice as nice, except when they are both angry at her." (Ages 4-8)

Jenness, Aylette. FAMILIES; A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY, COMMITMENT AND LOVE. Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
Here is a book that truly lives up to the promise of its title. Each double-page spread includes a first-person statement from a child or teenager, describing her or his family, accompanied with a black-and-white photograph of the family described. Interracial, single-parent, communal, extended and foster families are included in addition to the families of 3-year-old Elliott, who was adopted by a gay male couple, and of 16-year-old Jody, whose mother only recently came out and now lives with her lover, Carol. Based on an exhibit originating from the Boston Children's Museum, this book is exemplary in its inclusiveness and presentation: no family structure is presented as the "norm." (All ages)

Schaffer, Patricia. CHAG SAMEACH! (HAPPY HOLIDAY). Tabor Sarah, 1986.
Twenty-two black-and-white photographs of Jews from diverse racial backgrounds illustrate an introduction to Jewish holidays. The history of each holiday is explained, as well as the traditional observances, greetings and special foods. One photograph shows a lesbian family observing Havdalah. (Ages 3-7)

Schaffer, Patricia. HOW BABIES AND FAMILIES ARE MADE (THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY!) Tabor Sarah, 1988.
A concise account of baby and family making, notable for its inclusion of information not easily found in children's books about human reproduction. In addition to briefly discussing sexual intercourse, nine-month pregnancy and vaginal birth, the text explains alternative insemination and adoption, miscarriage and premature birth, cesarean section and babies born with disabilities. Six of the black-and-white line drawings make visual references to adults and children with disabilities, one drawing includes an interracial family and another shows a lesbian couple. Although the illustrations are average at best, many adults will welcome the wealth of hard-to-find information and alternatives this single volume contains. (Ages 5-10)

Tax, Meredith. FAMILIES. Illustrated by Marylin Hafner. Little, Brown, 1981.
Similar in content and presentation to Drescher's YOUR FAMILY, MY FAMILY (see above), this easy nonfiction book is written from the point of view of six-year-old Angie who

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describes the variety of families she has observed in her neighborhood. Her friend, Susie, lives in a lesbian family: "Susie lives with her mother and godmother... When I asked Susie where her father lives, she said she didn't have any father." (Ages 4-8)

BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT AIDS

Fassler, David and Kelly McQueen. WHAT'S A VIRUS ANYWAY?; THE KID'S BOOK ABOUT AIDS. Waterfront Books, 1990.
Provides clear, accurate information about AIDS and people with AIDS at a level preschoolers can understand. The text, accompanied by children's drawings, briefly explains viruses, HIV, how people contract AIDS, and what people with AIDS are like. The emphasis on the latter, with the message that people with AIDS are just like everyone else, makes this book particularly distinctive. Children are encouraged to draw pictures and express their own feelings on blank pages included throughout the book. Also available in a Spanish language edition. (Ages 3-8)

Hausherr, Rosmarie. CHILDREN AND THE AIDS VIRUS; A BOOK FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS AND TEACHERS. Clarion, 1989.
Text in large typeface describes what AIDS is, how it is transmitted and not transmitted (eg. insects, doorknobs, holding hands), providing clear, accurate information. Hausherr also focuses on the challenges faced by two children with AIDS, five-year-old Jonathan and ten-year-old Celeste, concluding with the reassurance that it is safe to play with, hug and share secrets with a person with AIDS. More detailed information appears in smaller typeface throughout the book, furnishing further background for the adult or older child who wants to know more. (Ages 4-8)

Jordan, MaryKate. LOSING UNCLE TIM. Illustrated by Judith Friedman. Albert Whitman, 1989.
Young Daniel enjoys spending time with his favorite uncle and has difficulty accepting the news that Uncle Tim has AIDS. A simple yet realistic account of Daniel's responses to Uncle Tim's prolonged illness and eventual death is a accompanied by full-page illustrations in soft earth tones. Winner of the 1990 Lambda Award in the juvenile literature category. (Ages 5-9)

Merrifield, Margaret. COME SIT BY ME. Illustrated by Heather Collins. Women's Press, 1990.
Karen quickly makes friends with Nicholas, a new boy in her preschool class, and then is herself shunned by other children because Nicholas has AIDS. Hearing this, Karen's enlightened parents are shocked and call a special meeting for teachers and parents to talk about the problem. Once everyone involved has accurate information on AIDS, both Nicholas and Karen are treated

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with respect and affection. Full-color illustrations show a multiracial classroom and a three-page appendix gives further information on HIV. (Ages 3-5)

Schilling, Sharon. MY NAME IS JONATHAN (AND I HAVE AIDS). Prickly Pair, 1990.
Jonathan is a spirited six year old who has lived with HIV from the time he was born. In this candid first-person photo-essay, he describes what his life is like at home and at school, assuring readers that AIDS is not transmitted through casual contact. Jonathan is one of the two children featured in Hausherr's CHILDREN AND THE AIDS VIRUS (see above), however, this book is for an older audience and provides a more intimate, in-depth view of Jonathan's life. (Ages 6-9)

SEX ROLES, SEXUAL IDENTITY AND POSITIVE SELF-IMAGES

Aitkin, Amy. RUBY THE RED KNIGHT. Macmillan, 1983.
In Ruby's fantasy play, she confronts a giant, a dragon and an evil wizard, restoring harmony to an imaginary kingdom. Remarkably, Ruby's conquests do not involve any violence; in each case she comes up with a clever solution to resolve the conflict peacefully. (Ages 3-6)

Bang, Molly. DELPHINE. Morrow, 1988.
Accompanied by a wolf and a cougar, heroic Delphine makes a perilous journey across mountains and raging rivers to the post office to pick up a package from her grandmother. (Ages 3-5)

Blank, Joani. A KID'S FIRST BOOK ABOUT SEX. Illustrated by Marcia Quakenbush. Yes Press, 1983.
This basic introduction to sex and sexuality is particularly distinctive for two reasons: (1) it presents sex first and foremost as a pleasurable activity, rather than solely as a function of reproduction; and (2) it makes no heterosexist assumptions in its discussions of love and sexual partners. This is the only children's book about sex that does not relegate "homosexuality" to a separate one or two-page section. (Ages 7-11)

Brown, Tricia. SOMEONE SPECIAL, JUST LIKE YOU. Photographs by Fran Ortiz. Holt, 1982.
"What makes someone special are the same things that make you special, too." Black-and-white photographs of young children with disabilities at work and at play in a preschool setting are accompanied by a simple, patterned text intended to increase understanding and acceptance among all children. (Ages 2-5)

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De Veaux, Alexis. AN ENCHANTED HAIR TALE. Illustrated by Cheryl Hanna. Harper & Row, 1987.
Sudan's wonderful hair -- "a fan daggle of locks and lions and lagoons" -- sets him apart from other kids in his neighborhood, who tease him because he is different. Upset by their cruel teasing, he storms off and far from home, stumbles upon a whole family of people with enchanted hair who help him celebrate his differences. De Veaux's poetry, rich with magic and imagery, speaks of the necessity of leaving home to find a community of kindred spirits who appreciate what others despise. (Ages 6-10)

DePaola, Tomi. OLIVER BUTTON IS A SISSY. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979.
The boys at school tease Oliver and call him a sissy because he prefers reading, drawing and jumping rope to sports. Oliver's parents push him to participate in sports (just to get some exercise) but Oliver refuses, opting instead for a tap dancing class. A fine portrait of a gentle boy who refuses to bow to peer pressure. (Ages 3-5)

Goffstein, M.B. A WRITER. Zolotow/Harper & Row, 1984.
In her marvelously restrained style, Goffstein describes how a writer works, connecting her metaphorically to a gardener who is "never sure of her ground or of which seeds are rooting there." Tiny delicate paintings sustain the relective mood of the text and show a writer who looks a bit like Gertrude Stein. (Ages 6 and up)

Hearn, Emily. GOOD MORNING, FRANNY, GOOD NIGHT, FRANNY. Illustrated by Mark Thurman. Women's Press, 1985.
Franny is an active, wheelchair-mobile girl who makes friends with Ting Kim, a Korean girl who speaks no English. While Franny is hospitalized, the Kim family moves away from the neighborhood but Ting finds a way to say good-bye. Bright colors and an upbeat tone mark a unique story of friendship. (Ages 4-8)

Herzig, Alison Cragin and Jane Lawrence Mali. OH, BOY! BABIES! Photographs by Katrina Thomas. Little, Brown, 1980.
A fairly lengthy photo-essay chronicles a six-week period during which a group of fifth and sixth grade boys took an after-school class in infant care. The boys' enthusiasm and sheer delight with the babies is captured both in direct quotes of their conversations with each other and in the accompanying black-and-white photographs. (Ages 7-12)

Lobel, Arnold. FROG AND TOAD ARE FRIENDS. Harper & Row, 1970.
The first volume in a series of easy readers which have come to be considered classics. Familiar vocabulary, short sentences, brief chapters and detailed illustrations make Lobel's stories perfect for beginning readers. Each of the books in the Frog and Toad series intentionally focuses on the joys of male friendship

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and bonding. Other titles in this series are: FROG AND TOAD TOGETHER, FROG AND TOAD ALL YEAR, and DAYS WITH FROG AND TOAD. Arnold Lobel died from AIDS in 1988. (Ages 5-8)

Mack, Bruce. JESSE'S DREAM SKIRT. Illustrated by Marian Buchanan. Lollipop Power, 1979.
"There are and were and always will be boys who wear dresses and skirts and things that whirl, twirl, flow and glow." Jesse, who loves to wrap himself in sheets, dreams of wearing a multicolored skirt that's made just for him. He is pleased when his mother makes him a skirt like the one he described to her from his dream but when he wears his new skirt to daycare, some of the other children tease him. A wise and understanding male daycare teacher leads the children in a discussion that enables them to reevaluate their preconceived notions about gender roles. (Ages 3-6)

Mahy, Margaret. JAM; A TRUE STORY. Illustrated by Helen Craig. Little, Brown, 1985.
When Mom gets a new job as an atomic scientist, Dad decides to stay home to take care of the house and kids. When he turns out to be such a competent housekeeper that he soon runs out of routine household chores, he busies himself with making plum jam -- so much of it, in fact, that the whole family must eat plum jam for breakfast, lunch and dinner for months. (Ages 3-6)

Mahy, Margaret. THE MAN WHOSE MOTHER WAS A PIRATE. Illustrated by Margaret Chamberlain. Viking, 1986.
Life changes for a rather stuffy, dull little man when he accompanies his mother (a former pirate) to her beloved sea. Mahy's descriptions of the sea are lyrical, giving readers a strong sense of the ocean's powerful pull in the midst of a fun story. (Ages 4-7)

Waxman, Stephanie. WHAT IS A GIRL? WHAT IS A BOY? Thomas Y. Crowell, 1989.
Black-and-white photographs of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds engaged in nontraditional activities (boys playing with dolls, girls playing basketball, for example) break down sex role stereotypes. So what's the difference? The text goes on to explain anatomical differences between boys and girls, men and women. A straight-forward presentation of a topic preschoolers frequently find confusing. (Ages 3-5)

Zolotow, Charlotte. WILLIAM'S DOLL. Illustrated by William Pene DuBois. Harper and Row, 1972.
Little William wants a doll to hug and cuddle. Instead his dad buys him toys he thinks a boy should have -- a basketball and a train -- and although William likes them, he still longs for a doll. Only his grandmother understands William's need for a baby doll "so that he can practice being a father." (Ages 2-4)

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BOOKS TO SHARE WITH OLDER KIDS

Although none of the following books are about lesbian or gay parents, each one deals directly or indirectly with sex roles, nonconformity and/or the myth of the perfect family. They are suggested for shared family reading and discussion.

Upper Elementary

Bawden, Nina. THE OUTSIDE CHILD. Lothrop, 1989.
Fitzhugh, Louise. HARRIET THE SPY. Harper & Row, 1964.
Howker, Janni. "The Topiary Garden," in THE BADGER ON THE BARGE,AND OTHER STORIES. Greenwillow, 1985.
Jukes, Mavis. BLACKBERRIES IN THE DARK. Illustrated by Thomas B. Allen. Knopf, 1985.
King-Smith, Dick. MARTIN'S MICE. Crown, 1989.
Mark, Jan. HANDLES. Atheneum, 1985.
Walter, Mildred Pitts. JUSTIN AND THE BEST BISCUITS IN THE WORLD. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1986.

Teenagers

Cormier, Robert. THE CHOCOLATE WAR. Pantheon, 1974.
Dickinson, Peter. EVA. Delacorte, 1989.
Furlong, Monica. WISE CHILD. Knopf, 1987.
Mahy, Margaret. CATALOGUE OF THE UNIVERSE. McElderry/Atheneum, 1986.
Myers, Walter Dean. FALLEN ANGELS. Scholastic, 1988.
Staples, Suzanne Fisher. SHABANU; DAUGHTER OF THE WIND. Knopf, 1989.
Vinke, Hermann. THE SHORT LIFE OF SOPHIE SCHOLL. Harper & Row, 1984.

This bibliography was prepared for "Educating Our Children: A Workshop for Gay/Lesbian Parents," sponsored by the Madison Gay/Lesbian Resource Center on November 3, 1990 in Madison, Wisconsin. Funds for the workshop were provided by a grant from the New Harvest Foundation.

Kathleen T. Horning is a librarian and children's literature specialist at the Cooperative Children's Book Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is also a children's librarian at Madison Public Library. Kathleen has served on the American Library Association's Notable Children's Books Committee, the Newbery Medal Committee and the Coretta Scott King Award Committee. She writes a quarterly column on alternative press children's books for BOOKLIST magazine.

June 1, 1992

Dear Student of Ed. Admin. 835,

This is a reminder letter to those individuals who completed the Alternative Families Questionnaire in Dr. Capper's class on the day of April 28, 1992 (administrators, teachers, and pupil-services personnel working in a K-12 school district). I would appreciate it if you could **remind** your school/district librarian or media specialist to please complete and return the Alternative Families Questionnaire-- for Librarians and Media Specialists, if s/he has not done so already. Again, the completion of the questionnaire is strictly **voluntary** and all responses are confidential and anonymous.

If for some reason your school/district librarian or media specialist has misplaced his/her copy of the questionnaire, I have attached another copy with this letter. Completed questionnaires can be mailed to:

Steven A. Rubin
Department of Counseling Psychology
and Counselor Education
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1000 Bascom Mall
Room 321- Education Building
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Your help in my research endeavors has been and continues to be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Steven A. Rubin

Steven A. Rubin
Master's Student

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June 1, 1992

Dear Student of Ed. Admin. 860,

This is a reminder letter to those individuals who completed the Alternative Families Questionnaire in Dr. Peterson's class on the day of April 30, 1992 (administrators, teachers, and pupil-services personnel working in a K-12 school district). I would appreciate it if you could **remind** your school/district librarian or media specialist to please complete and return the Alternative Families Questionnaire-- for Librarians and Media Specialists, if s/he has not done so already. Again, the completion of the questionnaire is strictly **voluntary** and all responses are confidential and anonymous.

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Thank you for your time and have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Steven A. Rubin

Steven A. Rubin
Master's Student

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April 30, 1992

Dear Student,

As part of my master's thesis in the department of counseling psychology and counselor education, I am investigating the various issues and needs (academic as well as psychosocial ones) of children who live and/or grow up with one or more gay/lesbian/bisexual parents. Some of these children (youngsters as well as teens) face considerable difficulties, pressures, and hardships-- both within the school community as well as from the general cultural milieu. With the support and respect from others within a caring, accepting, sensitive, and positive school environment, however, these students are able to grow, learn, and succeed-- personally, academically, emotionally, as well as socially.

The purpose of this study is to examine the informal as well as formal sources of support that these students are currently receiving within the school setting itself. Specifically, I am exploring three areas:

1. What are educators' (primarily administrators, pupil-personnel staff, and classroom teachers) views and levels of awareness regarding the needs of students who have one or more gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents?

2. What types of curriculum and programming, regarding family diversity (with an emphasis on gay and lesbian families), are currently in place (or may be implemented in your schools in the near future) for **all** students?

3. What "informal" sources of support exist for children who have a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent(s)? (Here, the resources of elementary and middle school libraries will be surveyed.)

First, I'd like you to fill out the attached questionnaire. Next, I'd like you to please ask the elementary or middle school librarian/media specialist in your district to fill out the librarian survey. This questionnaire is self-explanatory and asks the librarian to provide information as to the location and accessibility of fourteen book titles that portray families with a gay or lesbian parent. I have provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of this questionnaire. The matching numbers in the top, right-hand corner of the two questionnaires are for the purposes of data analyses only. Please be assured that all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, as no names of persons or schools are to be provided. Finally, I have provided two copies of an excellent bibliography that gives a comprehensive list of books on family diversity, including gay and lesbian families. Please share the second bibliography with your school/district librarian.

Thank you for your attention, information, and time. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Steven A. Rubin

Steven A. Rubin
Master's Student

NOTICE

Your response to this questionnaire is voluntary.

In no way are you obligated to participate in this research.

Alternative Families Questionnaire

(Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Pupil-Services Personnel)

Instructions: Please take 10-15 minutes to answer the following questions and return to me when completed. Remember, all responses will be kept completely confidential.

1. Your position at work:

__ classroom teacher
__ principal/assistant principal
__ district administrator
__ Pre K-12 director of pupil-personnel services/special education
__ Pre K-12 director of curriculum/instruction
__ support services personnel (e.g. school psychologist, counselor, speech & language)
__ other (please specify) _____

2. The school level(s) which your position involves:

__ elementary
__ middle
__ secondary
__ Pre K-12
__ other (please specify) _____

3. The approximate size of your school district:

__ less than 250 students
__ between 250 and 500 students
__ between 501 and 1,000 students
__ between 1,001 and 5,000 students
__ between 5,001 and 10,000 students
__ more than 10,000 students

4. The approximate distance, in miles, your district is from the city of Madison:

__ my school district is the Madison Public School District
__ less than 10 miles
__ between 10 and 30 miles
__ between 31 and 60 miles
__ between 61 and 90 miles
__ more than 90 miles

5. How would you classify the town/city in which your school district resides?

__ rural
__ suburban
__ urban

6. Currently, to what extent does your school/district educate its students on the variety of alternative family structures that exists in our society? (e.g. single-parent families, blended & step-families, bi-racial marriages, extended families, gay/lesbian families)

7. Currently, what types of practices is your school/district utilizing to provide support and/or services to students who are growing up in families with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent(s)? (e.g. support/"rap" groups, classroom discussions on family diversity, library books & videos, parent groups)

8. What are some ways that you or your school district **can** provide support to these students and/or their families?

9. Given that the state of Wisconsin has a pupil non-discrimination statute (s.118.3) that prohibits discrimination against K-12 pupils in the public schools, what **BARRIERS** do you perceive to be in existence in your school/district (or community) that may make it difficult to:

   a) disseminate information to colleagues and students regarding gay and lesbian families?

   b) provide services to students who are growing up in these families?

10. Regardless of whether or not your school building, district, community, etc. has students who are growing up in a family with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent(s), to what extent do you think it's important to provide information to educate **ALL** students about family diversity?

11. In your opinion, what do you think would be some of the concerns facing children and teens who are growing up in a family with one or more gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents?

12. Are you aware of any students in your school/district/community who have one or more gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents? If yes, how did you obtain this information?